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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ROMANCE TO REALISM:
THE WESTERN FICTION
OF RALPH CONNOR AND R. J. C. STEAD

BY

JEAN E. HORTON ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 1994

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled ROMANCE TO REALISM: THE WESTERN FICTION OF RALPH CONNOR AND R. J. C. STEAD submitted by JEAN E. HORTON in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT

The once popular western fiction works of Ralph Connor (pseudonym for Winnipeg clergyman Charles Gordon) are dismissed as failed novels by some, but recognized by more perceptive readers as formulaic romances with predictable plots and stereotypical characters. As well, the early books of Robert Stead, who apparently intended to emulate Connor's fiction as well as his success, have too often been assessed as novels, when they are actually popular romances. The narrative patterns of these Connor and Stead popular romances and their young romance heroes bear resemblance to the plots and characters of medieval romances. This thesis demonstrates that Connor's and Stead's romances are a part of a narrative tradition which, in English literature, has existed for more than six hundred years; further, it examines the progression of Stead's fiction from romance to novel. Chapter One discusses the nature of romance. Chapter Two considers Ralph Connor's western romances in terms of the qualities of romance examined in Chapter One, and includes a close reading of *The Prospector.* Chapter Three examines the movement from romance to realism in Robert Stead's fiction. Chapter Four compares the original manuscript of Stead's posthumously published novel, *Dry Water,* with the third manuscript, on which the published novel was based, and shows that *Dry Water,* like Stead's earlier novel, *Grain,* does not abandon romance, but links romance and realism. The thesis also includes an introduction and a brief conclusion.

For my father, Randy Horton,
who has taught me, by example,
the meaning of courage and endurance

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Introduction

I discovered the fiction of Ralph Connor (pseudonym for the Reverend Charles W. Gordon) when, as a graduate student at the University of Alberta, I took a reading course in Canadian history with Professor John Foster, during which I became particularly interested in the social gospel movement in western Canada, a movement which included, among others, Ralph Connor. One might say that Ralph Connor's formulaic romances are extensions of the sermons their author preached each Sunday from his Presbyterian pulpit in Winnipeg. They are, in fictionalised form, the Christian view of the combat between good and evil, order and disorder; and they represent the "muscular" Christianity, the social gospel which their author espoused, locating heaven on earth and focusing on the quality of life here and now, rather than the life hereafter. I recognized Connor's religiously didactic narratives as cousins to the stories in the Sunday School papers of my own childhood. Connor's narratives, however, are more skillfully written than those Sunday School papers I read each week; the man knew how to tell a story. Moreover, in his books I saw some of the narrative patterns common to medieval romances. The adventures of Connor's missionaries and Mounties resemble the adventures of Sir Gawain and Sir Guy of Warwick; medieval knights fight dragons and infidels, while Connor's "knights" battle drunkenness and apostasy. Like the knights of medieval romances, Connor's fictional young missionaries or Mounties are at first promising but inexperienced. And like their medieval counterparts, the place where they prove themselves, western Canada, is to them an unfamiliar place.

But though these twentieth century romances are full of adventure, their religious didacticism suggests that they were written to evangelize. As a matter of fact, they were. Connor's earliest book, *Black Rock: A Tale of the Selkirks*, was published serially in *The Westminster*, a publication of the Presbyterian Church. And had I known anything about medieval romance when I received the weekly papers in Sunday School, I would have recognized in them the narrative patterns of adventure, testing, and triumph which I later discovered in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Guy of Warwick*. Didacticism, religious or social, or both, is not unusual in romance.

At the same time that I was reading history with Professor Foster, I was enrolled in a seminar on western Canadian writers, taught by Professor Dick Harrison, in which I began examining Robert Stead's early fiction as well as his later novel *Grain*, an example of early prairie realism. (At that time Stead's posthumously published novel, *Dry Water*, had not yet been published.) Like Connor's fiction, Robert Stead's early fiction is set in the Canadian West in the early twentieth century, where attractive young men court beautiful young women and eventually settle down to family and community building. Unlike Connor's protagonists, who have all had university training before going to western Canada, almost all of Stead's main characters are self educated, as Stead was, some before they arrive in the West, and some acquiring polish as they successfully meet challenges. Stead's early books are not romances of the missionary or the Mountie, as Connor's are, but of young homesteaders. Moreover, these books are not religiously didactic as Connor's fiction is; a recurring theme in these usually formulaic narratives, however, is the danger of materialism, of deriving more pleasure from large bank accounts than from working the land or from enjoying family and community life.

Although Stead's early romances were influenced by Connor, he later moved away from the formulaic romance of his early fiction, and toward realism. Even the earliest of his books, *The Bail Jumper*, for all its adventure and its good and bad characters, indicates, in the fighting of a prairie fire, the beginning of Stead's later realism. *Grain* and *Dry Water*, his two final books, are realistic novels. In fact, as Harrison has noted, "Stead was the only writer to span the development of prairie fiction from the popular genre of romances of pioneering to realistic novels scrutinizing the values of prairie society" (Toye, 771). But Stead didn't abandon romance, despite his move toward realism. By means of a narrative stance reminiscent of Fielding, established in the first chapter of his realistic novel *Grain*, Stead introduces the idea of the romance hero and the nature of heroism. He then ironically develops this idea through the novel's protagonist, physically and socially awkward Gander Stake, and through the community's attitudes toward their participation in World War I. In his final novel, *Dry Water*, Stead employs romance in another way, counterpoising the romance of Donald Strand's simple prairie childhood with the materialism of Donald's middle age.

My interest in the fiction of Connor and of Stead, combined with a reading of Dick Harrison's *Unnamed Country*, led me to examine their work in relation to romance in a doctoral thesis. Connor's most powerful romances are set in the Canadian West or in the Ontario frontier of the mid-nineteenth century, locales which present challenges to his protagonists; and all of Stead's fiction, focusing on homesteading, is set in western Canada, a place of challenge and promise. Now it is true that Stead's bridging romance and realism gives him a unique position in Canadian fiction. But Connor is certainly not the only Canadian writer of romance set in the West; Agnes Laut, Gilbert Parker, Arthur Stringer, and Nellie McClung, among others, wrote romances set in western Canada. Arthur Stringer tried unsuccessfully to farm in Alberta, but of these writers, only Nellie McClung spent most of her life in western Canada. Perhaps because of this, her fiction, like Connor's and Stead's, conveys an authenticity of place that is lacking in other writers. Like Connor, Nellie McClung's religiously didactic fiction reflects her active role as a social gospeler. Her narratives, in which female crusaders prove themselves in challenge after challenge, might well have been combined with Stead's fiction to examine the movement from romance to realism. But an examination of the Stead papers suggested that Stead admired Connor's fiction and that he encouraged the linking of his name and work with Connor's work (see chapter three). Critics Thompson, Logan and French strengthen this opinion. Moreover, Stead's papers do not reveal a sustained admiration for any writer other than Connor. For this reason I selected Ralph Connor as the romancer whose western fiction I wished to examine in combination with Robert Stead's fiction.

The fiction of Connor and Stead demonstrates a movement from romance to realism, from Connor's consistent romance to Stead's early romances and eventually to Stead's realism. Assessment of their work, however, which is remarkably varied, reveals a "category confusion" among literary critics (Brock, p. 1). Roy Daniells, Judith Skelton Grant, Edward McCourt, John Moss, Laurence Ricou, Thomas Saunders, Donald Stephens, J. Lee Thompson and John H. Thompson, and F. W. Watt refer to Connor's fiction and to Stead's early fiction as "novels." Dick Harrison, John Lennox, and Eric Thompson call them romances and consistently assess them as such. That other critics refer to these works as novels is partly understandable; many modern readers have become accustomed to refer to any long fictional work as a novel. In Toye's *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature,* Donald Stephens includes

Connor and Stead under the entry "Novels in English." Toye does not include an entry for romance. This is unfortunate; judging this fiction by the standards of the novel does it a disservice, for the novel and the romance approach human experience in different ways.

It is my purpose in this thesis to demonstrate that Connor's fiction and Stead's early fiction are popular romances, and not novels, and that only when this fiction is perceived as popular romance can it be fairly assessed. A generic clarification of romance will demonstrate the value of these authors in western Canadian literary development and will contribute to subsequent critical comment of Connor's and Stead's work. Furthermore, a close examination of Connor's and Stead's fiction illuminates the nature not only of popular romance, but of English romance from its medieval beginnings to the early twentieth century in western Canada. In the Introduction to his 1988 book *Studies in Medieval English Romances,* Derek Brewer comments that "folktale in many respects offers us the key to understanding romance, and the study of folktake [sic] itself is undergoing a revolution and an expansion comparable with and linked with the study of romance" (p. 1). Connor's and Stead's romances are not folktales, it is true, but their formulaic plots create in the reader some of the same expectations as folktales: that the protagonist, a good man, will successfully meet all challenges and ultimately be rewarded, that good will prevail over evil, and that order will be restored. To demonstrate this, an extensive examination of one of Connor's romances, *The Prospector,* completes chapter two. *The Prospector* is about a missionary, a key figure in Connor's romance, and a modern type of the archetypal medieval knight.

In short, then, the argument of this thesis is that Ralph Connor's and Robert

Stead's romances have been incorrectly categorized by most critics. They are popular romances, not novels; and only when they are understood as romances can they be correctly assessed. Furthermore, an extended examination of a romance provides another approach not only to understanding Connor's and Stead's romances, but to understanding the genre itself. Finally, these discussions of romance illuminate Stead's linking of romance and realism in *Grain* and *Dry Water*, his two realistic novels.

The brief description of romance which constitutes chapter one begins with a discussion of what romance is, including a selection of descriptive comments by romance critics such as Northrop Frye, John Stevens, Derek Brewer, Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Dorothy Everett. After this introductory discussion of the nature of romance, there follows a series of contrasts between romance and other literary forms such as epic, allegory, parable, and comedy. The purpose of this section of chapter one is to describe romance by discovering what it is *not*. Finally, I focus on the nature of the popular romance to show, through a comparison of a medieval adventure romance with a nineteenth century popular sentimental romance, that nineteenth century romances, with which Connor and Stead are likely to have been familiar, are descended from their medieval counterparts.

Chapter two examines the fiction of Ralph Connor. Since the majority of critics refer to his books as novels and judge them by the standards of novels, the chapter begins with a summary of what critics have said about Connor's books. An examination of the books reveals that they are romances and that they should be judged as such. And so, in the remainder of chapter two, selected plots, characters, and settings of Connor's formulaic fiction are assessed in light of typical plots, characters, and settings of romance. As another approach to understanding Connor's romances and the nature of romance generally, a reading of Connor's romance *The Prospector* provides an extended examination of a popular romance. Shock McGregor, missionary protagonist of *The Prospector,* represents one of the three types of characters which Dick Harrison identifies as "the central archetypes of prairie fiction. The most characteristic, though not the most numerous, are the Mounted Policemen, ministers, and school teachers" (*Unnamed Country,* 85). (Nellie McClung developed the school teacher in her fiction.)

It is true that the missionary figures as the main character in several of Connor's books, and not just *The Prospector*. *Black Rock, The Sky Pilot,* and *The Doctor* all have missionary protagonists (the doctor dies, and his missionary brother prevails). But of all Connor's romances, *The Prospector* is most like the medieval romance in which the knight rides out on a quest and returns a matured person who has proven himself in unfamiliar territory. Shock McGregor, an inarticulate young man, leaves the young woman he loves, and goes to western Canada as a Presbyterian missionary, learns to survive in a community of roughnecks, effects positive changes in the community to which he is sent, and then returns, transformed, to eastern Canada, to be reunited with his sweetheart, just as his medieval counterpart, the knight, undertakes a journey of transformation. So this Connor romance has been chosen for a close reading because it illustrates romance as an ongoing form which is linked to its time and place of writing.

Chapters three and four focus on the fiction of Robert Stead, whose realism developed from the romances which he wrote early in his career; in this way Stead is unlike Connor, whose books are consistently romances. Because Stead's work should be seen as evolving, I have approached it chronologically, examining selected books which illustrate this movement from romance to realism. Chapter three examines his books up to, and including, *Grain*, which is a realistic novel, not a romance, in which the narrator uses the vocabulary of romance— "hero," "rescue," "steed"—ironically, as Fielding used it. Moreover, in *Grain* some of the conventions of romance are ironically upended, revealing the distance between the characters' idealistic perceptions of World War I and and the actual deaths and injuries of the community's young men killed or injured in the war.

Chapter four is devoted to *Dry Water*, Stead's final novel, edited by Prem Varma, and published in 1983, twenty-four years after the author's death. Of the three existing manuscripts of this novel, dated 1935, 1946, and 1947, Prem Varma selected the 1947 manuscript for her edition of this novel. With the permission of the Stead family, I examined the Stead papers in the National Archives of Canada. Stead's correspondence with publishers regarding the manuscripts and the manuscripts themselves convinced me that the 1935 manuscript should have been published, not the shortened 1947 manuscript. In chapter four I have included summaries of the passages deleted from this third manuscript, on which the published book is based. These passages deleted from the first manuscript, some of them quite extensive, develop the idyllic harmony of the family and community in Donald Strand's childhood, Part One of the book. Juxtaposed with the materialism and the subsequent loss of spirituality which characterize most of the characters in Parts Two and Three, the idealism, or romance, of Donald's childhood provides a sad comment on the materialism of the adult Donald and his community. In other words, in *Dry Water*, a realistic novel, the romance of the past is set side by side with the realism of the present, the events of the past and the present implicitly commenting on each other.

The genre of Ralph Connor's frontier and western fiction, then, and of Robert Stead's early fiction is clarified in this thesis. If one understands romance, one can understand Connor's fiction and appreciate the evolution of Stead's fiction. And a close examination of Connor's and Stead's books increases the reader's appreciation of popular romance.

Chapter One

The Nature of Romance

Most critics who consider romance, whether it be medieval romance or romance as it is manifested in a range of literary periods, acknowledge the difficulty of defining this elusive genre without ambiguity. *The Harper Handbook to Literature,* of which Northrop Frye is senior editor, considers the history and characteristics of romance and offers the most extensive discussion of romance to be found in a literary handbook or dictionary. Frye, dean of romance criticism, provides the best overall description of romance in *Anatomy of Criticism.* His more recent *The Secular Scripture* considers the structure of romance at greater length. Kathryn Hume, building on Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism,* examines the romance hero from the psychological and literary standpoints. Other considerations of the general characteristics of romance include Nathaniel Hawthorne's preface to *The House of the Seven Gables,* William Gilmore Simms' preface to *The Yemasee: A Romance of Carolina,* and Henry James' preface to the American edition of *The American.* Sir Walter Scott's "Essay on Romance" concentrates on the history of the development of romance and includes a catalog of romances from various countries. John Finlayson's essays, "Definitions of Middle English Romance," Parts I and II; W. P. Ker's *Epic and Romance;* and Dorothy Everett's "A Characterization of the English Romances," confine their focus to the medieval romance. W. R. J. Barron's *English Medieval Romance,* Lee Ramsay's *Chivalric Romances,* and John Stevens' *Medieval Romance* address themselves primarily to medieval romance, but point out as well the relationship of the medieval and modern forms. Barron prefers to think of romance as a mode of presentation of human experience rather than as a genre, especially because of the continuity of the mode from medieval to contemporary romance. This medieval/modern relationship is discussed at even greater length in Velma Richmond's *The Popularity of Middle English Romance* and in Edmund Reiss's essay, "Romance."

Richard Chase's *The American Novel and Its Tradition* considers the manifestation of romance in American literature, objecting to the tendency of this fiction to address "polarities, opposites, and irreconcilables" without resolving them (1). Moreover, he dismisses popular romance as "amiable tricks." "Romances of this sort are sometimes defended because 'they tell a good story'—as opposed to the fiction of, say, Faulkner and Melville, which allegedly don't" (20). Chase's opinion certainly should not be dismissed; it does not, however, fall within the mainstream of critical comment on romance. That the popular romance emphasizes plot more than character or setting is a commonplace observation among the critics of romance, not a defense of the form. And that such fictional works resolve moral dilemmas in ways that are not, as a rule, reflected in human experience need not mean, as Chase claims, that they "falsify reality and the human heart" (21). Ralph Connor and Robert Stead wrote popular romances which might not reflect experiential reality—this is probably what Chase means when he says they "falsify reality"—but they do not "falsify ... the human heart." Although these narratives lack the complexity of more sophisticated literature, they reflect the best and the worst of human behavior, albeit in naive narratives.

Distinguishing the popular romance from other romances which may not be so widely read is difficult because the boundary between the two is blurred. Educated, literate people are sometimes skeptical of any literature designated as popular, associating such literature with the uncultured. But this is not necessarily true. Detective fiction and science fiction, which are forms of popular romance, are not only read by educated people, but often written by them as well. Dorothy Sayers, for example, is the author of the Lord Peter Wimsey detective series; J. I. M. Stewart, an Oxford don, wrote detective fiction as well. Some critics designate nineteenth and twentieth century popular romance as *formulaic fiction*, that is, fiction whose plots are predictable, and whose characters are stereotypical. Other critics describe popular romance as that kind of romance which affirms our cultural norms rather than challenging them. To distinguish popular literature from other literature, Northrop Frye, in *The Secular Scripture*, suggests the word *naive* to indicate literature which assumes little previous reading on the part of the reader. He includes in this category the poetry of Robert Burns and Emily Dickinson as well as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Contrasted with "naive" literature is what he calls "elite" literature, which, because of its many allusions to Classical and Biblical sources, requires of the reader a familiarity with those sources (26-27).

Almost all critics agree that one of the difficulties in describing romance is that it is simply not neat: its heroes sometimes resemble the heroes of epic; its very good or very bad characters bear similarities to the characters of allegory; its frequent happy-ever-after endings suggest its kinship with comedy; the distinction between the novel and the romance is often not clear. Moreover, as Finlayson points out, there is the problem of terms (Part I, 45-46). The word *romance* designates a literary genre, including within its scope both prose and metrical narratives from medieval romances to modern popular romances. And for some, including Chase, there is the linguistic problem of how to distinguish popular, formulaic romance from romances such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Scarlet Letter*. If the former is popular romance, is the latter unpopular romance? Then, too, further complexities arise from the use of the word *romantic*, which refers to a particular treatment of all the arts. The hazards of ambiguity in a discussion of romance are obvious. But an introductory discussion of the elements of romance, albeit brief, is illuminating to the fiction of Canadian writers Ralph Connor and Robert Stead, and may suggest some reasons for their immense, if temporary, popularity.

Mindful of these hazards, I shall not attempt a thorough definition or exhaustive discussion of romance either as a genre, a mode of treatment, or as any specific form within a larger genre, but shall provide a broad enough discussion of the nature of romance and of selected examples of romance to facilitate an examination of the Canadian romance and realism to be discussed in subsequent chapters. Before going further, I wish to clarify terms. Since realism is a mode or technique and romance is sometimes a mode and sometimes a genre, discussing the two together might seem like comparing the proverbial apples and oranges. This issue is further complicated by the fact that only some critics consider romance a genre; others classify it only as a mode of treatment. *Romanticism* and *realism* might be more appropriate terms if romanticism were solely the technique of the romance; that is only partially correct. Then there is the complication of *romance* and *novel*, since the novel is linked with realism. But the danger there lies in the tendency, even among fiction specialists, to treat the word *novel* as a linguistic convenience, and to label any long fictional work as a novel. In this thesis, *romantic* means "having to do with romance." When I use the word *novel*, I am referring to those book-length fictional works which are very often in the realistic mode.

The familiar romances which serve as examples in this chapter have been selected not only to illustrate narrative structure and characterization in the romance, but to show how romance shares some of the same characteristics with other genres and how, in fact, it is sometimes difficult to make a clear distinction between romance and other forms of fiction. The choice of these examples, though limited, is sufficient to clarify the subsequent discussion and to show how the romances of Connor and Stead are a part of an on-going tradition in English literature, which has existed for the last six hundred years. Since the medieval English romance is considered the prototypical romance of English literature, I have chosen, for most examples, incidents and passages from Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* set apart from the popular romances which outnumber them, but to which they are closely related. These are considered by critics of medieval romance to be among the best examples of the genre; furthermore, since these two romances are each discrete narratives, discussion of plot is clear. I have not included Arthurian romance in this discussion because its multiple sources and complication of narrative make its use impractical in a discussion as brief as this. Fairy tales, the least sophisticated and probably the oldest form of romance, provide narrative patterns, characters, and motifs which are echoed in the Canadian romances, and indeed in all romances. And not the least of their value in this discussion is their accessibility to the reader.

Another important means to understanding what romance is, is an examination of what it is not. Literary realism, a movement and technique associated primarily with the nineteenth century, but not limited to that time—remember the Wyf of Bath's gap teeth, moist leather boots, and red stockings—provides contrasts with romance which sharpen an understanding of romance. Furthermore, the discussion of realism, albeit briefer than the examination of romance, is especially pertinent to the discussion of Robert Stead's fiction: in his later books he moved toward realism from the formulaic romance of his earlier fiction. But Stead did not abandon romance: Dick Harrison notes that in Stead's realistic novel *Grain*, romance and realism are in tension with each other (*Unnamed Country*, 103). And in Stead's posthumously published novel *Dry Water*, romance again provides an ironic contrast to realism.

Romance is characterized by the unusual and the numinous. Distortions of time and place, and inexplicable twists of plot are commonplace. Palamon and Arcite, in Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, fight for years for the hand of the fair Emily, until a time when she should be an old lady; yet, after all those years she is still the beautiful maiden she was at the beginning of the combat. The wicked and beautiful queen in "Snow White" assumes the shape of a shrunken old woman dispensing apples. Mice become footmen, a pumpkin a coach. These are the narratives of a world of hopes and fears released from the constraints of rational control. As Scott, Hawthorne, Simms, Hume, Barron and others point out, romance is the domain of the *improbable* but *possible*, realism the domain of the probable. As Henry James comments,

> The only general attribute of projected romance that I can see, the only one that fits all its cases, is the fact of the kind of experience with which it deals—experience liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and, if we wish so to put the matter, drag upon it, and operating in a medium which relieves it, in a particular interest, of the inconvenience of a related, a measurable state, a state subject to all our vulgar communities. (James, xvii)

The disengagement from ordinary experience is often expressed in idealism. Romance does not reflect human interaction in representational terms; rather, it addresses itself to what it *might* be. Frye remarks that "The perennially childlike quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space" (*Anatomy*, 186).

This quality of nostalgia is reflected in the opening lines of numerous medieval romances and folk tales. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is set in a time long before the narration of the romance, in the early days of Britain's history. "The Knight's Tale" cites as its authority "olde stories" (l. 859); "The Wife of Bath's Tale" is set "in th'olde dayes of Kyng Arthour" (l. 857). Folk tales, the oldest and most enduring of the romances, are about children and young people and animals—at least all the heroes and heroines are young—and begin "Once upon a time." The plots of romances are filled with improbable happenings: oracular prophecies, miraculous rescues, superhuman feats. An enormous, headless green man, whose head is rolling about the floor in King Arthur's court, picks up his head and, holding it in his hand, goes on speaking as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened. A boy plants a magic bean which instantly grows into a plant which reaches far out of his sight, and at the top of which resides a fearsome giant. Not only do we read these narratives without objecting to what we know is unlikely in terms of daily human experience, but we continue to reread them year after year. Remarkably, we accept the improbable without question because we do not read romance literature with the same expectations placed on more representational works.

But we do have certain expectations of the plot structures of romance literature. When a knight rides out, leaving his familiar home behind him, we expect him to encounter love or danger, a damsel or a dragon—or both. And we know that the dragon will be slain and that the knight and the damsel may be wed at the end of the tale and live happily ever after. Seldom has the fire breathing dragon killed the knight, although the knight's survival is always threatened. And never is there doubt that the knight will marry the fair damsel, even though winning her hand in marriage may entail completing an apparently impossible task or rescuing the young lady from what seems certain death.

These plots are familiar to readers because they contain archetypal patterns characteristic of all romance, whether naive or elite. The first sight of the beloved might be analagous to a religious conversion or a refreshing drink of water. Perhaps the most familiar pattern is the journey which the romance hero undertakes. The journey is metaphoric as well as literal because this hero usually experiences a transformation during its course. This archetypal transformation may be expressed through a number of patterns of descent and ascent. These patterns, suggests Frye, are displacements of myth: stories of gods who die and are reborn are told on a level whose characters, albeit often superhuman, are less than divine. On the level of romance the hero, on travels through unknown territory, might have to combat monstrous enemies and be injured, almost to death. Or he might have to undergo a series of physical or moral tests. A familiar pattern in nineteenth century romance is serious illness; the hero or heroine's hangs in the balance (descent) until the usual recovery (ascent). In the romances of Connor and Stead the hero usually travels from eastern to western Canada, an unsettled, and thus unfamiliar, place.

Sir Gawain, an untested but superior man, leaves the court of Arthur on All Saints' Day and travels alone through an unfamiliar wintry landscape. After surviving the physical tests of finding his way through unknown places, he comes upon Sir Bercilak's castle, where he undergoes—and fails—a moral test. He is tempted three times by the lady of the castle. Although he valiantly and courteously tries to avoid moral compromise, Gawain, in accepting the green girdle, is guilty. (Admittedly, this is an unfair contest, since the lady has magic at her disposal, but Gawain does not.) From this castle he goes to his appointment with the Green Knight, presumably to have his head chopped off; instead, the Green Knight merely injures Gawain as punishment for his sin, and sends him back to Arthur's court, a chastened and wiser knight. At the level of displacement, the knight, an ideal man—but human after all, and not a god—has entered an unknown, perilous world where he barely escapes death, and from which he returns, transformed by the experience in this strange world, to the place from which he began his travels. This pattern is found in many romances, including Connor's and Stead's popular romances. Shock Macgregor, protagonist of Connor's *The Prospector*, leaves Toronto to be a missionary in Alberta. The challenges he meets in this unfamiliar place transform him from a shy and inarticulate seminary student to a self-possessed, assertive clergyman. Stead's John Harris (*The Homesteaders*) transformed by his journey to Alberta, returns to Manitoba a financially poorer man, but richer in his new appreciation of loving family relationships. Clearly the journey plot of the romance, albeit episodic, is more than an ordinary journey, for the hero undergoes a transformation. He may discover how to survive in the face of overwhelming danger. Or, like Gawain, the romance hero may acquire humility and moral strength in the process of confronting his human vulnerability.

Frye perceives this romance form as a quest, a process through which the hero matures, proves himself, and gains identity. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell's study of the hero myth—Campbell does not, as does Frye, differentiate between myth and romance—sets out a pattern similar to Frye's. What distinguishes

Campbell's work from Frye's is his psychological approach. While Campbell addresses himself to the psychological development of the hero, Frye examines romance from the literary standpoint. (To be sure, the approaches of Frye and Campbell are not mutually exclusive.)

One might object at this point that journey motifs and protagonists who develop through adverse experience are hardly the sole property of romance. Combat, love, and the maturing process have been the subjects of literature for centuries. What distinguishes the romance is not its subject matter, but, as numerous critics have noted, the *treatment* of such subject matter. In less formulaic literature, good does not always carry the day, nor the hero always prevail. Moreover, the hero's sweetheart may run off with his best friend. And by the end of the narrative in genres other than romance, the protagonist may be no wiser than he was at the beginning; or perhaps confrontations with truth may destroy him. So the subject matter of romance may indeed be the subject matter of, say, epic, allegory, tragedy, or a realistic novel. But in such narratives characterization, setting and plot differ considerably from those of romance.

In romance, plot is more important than character development. Characters are almost uniformly flat, two-dimensional. One knight hero resembles most other knights. Although Palamon and Arcite, in Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale," pray to Venus and to Mars respectively, the two knights are almost indistinguishable. On the low mimetic level, the prince in Snow White is an exact copy of the princes who rescue Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel. Kings, princesses, and stepmothers as well resemble each other.

Not only are the characters flat, but it is certainly true that in their interaction the characters of romance are curiously distanced from each other, not affecting each other, but carrying out their parts in the narrative as in a ritualized dance.

> The romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is in romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively. That is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks. (Frye, *Anatomy,* 304)

Thus the characters in romance are no less "real" than the characters in novels; they represent an internal reality, deeper, older, and perhaps more significant in terms of human potential than the characters of novels. Stevens points out that although the hero knight is a thoroughly good figure, he is, at the beginning of the narrative, unproven (70). Experience transforms him, and he comes to understand himself through a process which Jung calls individuation. Frye points out in *Anatomy of Criticism* that in Jungian terms, the knight in his struggles triumphs over the villain, his moral opposite (the Jungian shadow), and is united at last with his anima, the heroine, whose moral opposite might be a beautiful siren or witch. In his struggles the hero has the assistance or support from other archetypal figures. Jung's Wise Old Man, whose moral opposite is an evil magician, may appear as the king, the hero's father, or, as in Connor romances, the superintendent who advises the young missionary. The Wise Old Woman, who may be advisor, mother, wife, usually remains at home, awaiting his return. Her moral opposite is the old witch. The opposite of the knight's horse is a dragon; the opposite of his faithful companion, a traitor (195-6). Frye also suggests that "archetypes are most easily studied in highly conventionalized literature: that is, for the most part, naive, primitive, and popular literature" before extending such study into "the rest of literature" (104). Though they usually lack subtlety and ambiguity in the romances of

Connor and Stead, such archetypal figures, albeit stereotypical, are as appropriate in popular romance as they are in more complex literature. The clergyman's wife, Mrs. Murray, for example, and the mothers of the protagonists in Connor's are archetypal wise old women. Schoolmasters in Connor's and in Stead's fiction function as wise old men. The anima figure seems to be represented by Connor's Maisie (*The Man From Glengarry*) and Iola (*The Doctor*). Gardiner and Hiram Riles (*The Bail Jumper* and *The Homesteaders*) function as shadow figures.

What can be said of almost all characters of romance is that they are either good or bad, for the hero or against him. Absent are the grey characters, those who in more representational fiction embody both virtues and vices and who are recognizably lifelike and ordinary. Kathryn Hume sees this in psychological terms:

> The polarization is comprehensible if we remember that the psychological pattern is the form's prototype. In the ego's fight, there are few neutral forces. True, forces which are destructive at one stage can be helpful at a later, but at any given point in the conflict evil is evil because it can harm the ego, and good is good because it has the potentiality to help. In the symbolism of the unconscious these qualities are heightened to the same hyperbolic dimensions that we find so often in romance, and presumably this feature has endured because it satisfies some desire of the audience. (144)

In the tale of Sleeping Beauty the prince must overcome the spell which the wicked fairy has cast on the sleeping princess, struggling through the thick wall of briars which surrounds the castle. Although the king and queen, also sleeping, are sympathetic to his struggles, they are unable to assist him. The kiss which he bestows on the princess indicates the completion of his quest—by joining with his anima, the princess, and overcoming the spell of the wicked fairy, he has become complete. (On the psychological level at which Campbell works, the princess, too, is transformed by the kiss; she is awakened from her virginal sleep to sexual maturity.)

Another approach to understanding what romance is is to contrast it with what it is not, realism. A brief discussion of some of the distinctions between the two literary forms may sharpen one's sense of what each one is. It should be pointed out that realism is not a narrative form, but a mode, a treatment of literature. If romance is a narrative form which represents internal experience and truth, realism is a technique which often reflects truths about characters, truths which can be verified by the observations of others. This, however, does not make realism any easier to describe than romance. "Realism is a slippery term, sometimes used too loosely to be of any value except as an indicator of a reader's reaction. What seems real to one reader seems preposterous to another ..." (*Harper Handbook to Literature*, 386). Despite the elusiveness of the term and the impossibility of defining it, we can describe realism as a technique characterized by massive detail, measurable in time and space, as opposed to romance, which is linked with "the infinite, the eternal, and the ineffable" (Harrison, *Unnamed Country*, 75). Focus in realistic fiction is on the surfaces of things; human sensate experience, then, is reflected in the appearance, dress, and mannerisms of characters. Moreover, we come to understand characters through the decor of their homes, their choice of means of transportation, their conversations, their behavior in the boardroom or the bedroom.

The kinds of characters in realistic fiction are, for the most part, from the middle class, the novel (as opposed to romance) having originated in the middle class. In the most successful novels, characters are both individual and universal. We know, for example, what kind of clothing Emma Bovary wears and how she occupies herself during the day; moreover, we understand her dissatisfaction with her unimaginative husband and are impatient with his literal minded response to the opera. At the same time that we see Charles and Emma as particular chracters, we are aware of their membership in a larger category: the kindly but dull person mismatched with a spouse who perceives life in terms of romance.

Another characteristic of realism in fiction is that the plot progresses not so much by means of the chance and the magical intervention of superhuman powers, as by cause and effect. Realist plot satisfies our rational and empirical conceptions of nature, cause, and effect, while romance satisfies unconscious psychological necessities, where hopes and fears are liberated from the waking, rational world. Emma Bovary's lover Rodolphe deserts her because of her naive assumptions about the relationship. Her eventual ruin is the result of continued and compulsive buying on credit, and her death the result of her taking poison. From the beginning, she has been the cause of her own downfall. In romance, on the other hand, purposeful manipulation of coincidence is more operative than the cause and effect of realism. A castle which suddenly appears in the middle of a wilderness, the accidental meeting of relatives separated for years, the discovery of a will thought to be non-existent: these chance happenings determine the fate of characters in romance.

Realism has been with us at least since Chaucer's pilgrims, who are at once typical and individual, travelled to Canterbury. The Miller's hairy wart, red beard, and abundance of nose hair, signal his particularity. The Wife of Bath's gap teeth, red stockings, and moist leather shoes make her as individual as the unfortunate Cook troubled with a lesion on his leg. But although realism as a technique has been evident for centuries, the writers of the literary movement referred to as Realism, a movement which began about 1830, were the first to discuss the principles of realism in literature.

In an early discussion of the nature of realism in chapter seventeen of *Adam Bede*, George Eliot pauses in mid-narrative to explain why, in chapter sixteen, the Rector, Mr. Irwine, does not counsel Arthur Donnithorne in a way that would have averted later tragedy:

> But you must have perceived long ago ... that I aspire to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed; the reflection faint or confused; but I feel as much bound to tell you, as precisely as I can, what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath. (221)
>
> * * *
>
> These fellow-mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are: you can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit, nor rectify their dispositions; and it is these people—amongst whom your life is passed—that it is needful you should tolerate, pity, and love: it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people, whose movements of goodness you should be able to admire—for whom you should cherish all possible hopes, all possible patience. And I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this ... .(222)

Implicit in Eliot's description of realism is her understanding of romance as well. If Eliot's realistic characters are "ugly, stupid, inconsistent people," she perceives the "faulty characters" of romance "always on the wrong side, and your virtuous ones on the right" (222). Had she represented our real "mixed, entangled" world as an ordered world, Eliot argues, and included characters who are not morally ambiguous, how could the reader interpret "your neighbour, Mrs. Green, who was really kind to you in your last illness, but has said several ill-natured things about you since your convalescence?—nay, with your excellent husband himself, who has other irritating habits besides that of not wiping his shoes?" (222)

As Eliot herself admits, "a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind" is an ambiguous phrase (221). The selectivity of Eliot's mirror might not duplicate that of Thomas Hardy or William Dean Howells. In fact, as with romance, any attempt to describe realism inevitably encounters ambiguities.

In romance, then, one knight is pretty much like another, all of them embodying the ideals of their culture. Other characters are general as well, not individual. All of them are seen "against a background primarily determined by the appropriate literary convention" (Watt, 16). Realism, on the other hand, focuses on the individualised character functioning in a particular time and place. In fact, the development of character is usually the focus of realism.

Romance and Other Genres

Romance, admittedly, shares some characteristics with other forms of literature. The characters of romance and allegory comprise a moral scheme: good or bad; for or against the hero. And the heroes, both of romance and of allegory, struggle to defeat opposing characters in order to accomplish a task or goal. Then, too, the romance hero bears some similarity to the epic hero: both encounter adventure episodically; both are courageous. The usually happy ending of most romances is also a characteristic of comedy. The hazy borderlines of any form make it impossible to eliminate all possibility of ambiguity. Still, distinctions between forms can be sufficiently described so that ambiguity is at least minimized.

Allegory is "a form of extended narrative" (Holman, 13) in which one story represents another, both stories apparent to the discerning reader. Concrete characters represent individual abstract qualities. In *The Faerie Queene* the Red Cross Knight, representing the English Church, is accompanied by Lady Una, who represents Faith.

He encounters a serpentine monster (Error) and, later, creatures who represent such qualities as Doubt and Despair. Although the story of the Red Cross Knight may be read as a good adventure romance, a second story, the narrative of the faith journey of the English Church, is implicit in the more concrete narrative of the Red Cross Knight's adventures. In romance, too, moral qualities are attached to the characters: the hero is good; the wicked witches, the monsters, and most giants are bad characters, functioning in opposition to the hero. But the moral qualities of character and plot in romance do not imply a second narrative as they do in allegory; there is only one story.

Closely related to allegory are fable and parable. Actually, the fable is a form of allegory, distinct because its characters are animals who represent abstract moral qualities. The parable, like the allegory, is a moral narrative, but the characters do not represent abstract moral qualities; rather, this short narrative is, as a rule, inserted into a longer work, a sermon, for example, as an illustration which clarifies the meaning of this sermon. And this illustrative function of the parable distinguishes it from romance.

Epic, as well, is a near cousin of romance. A long, narrative, and often encyclopedic poem, an epic recounts deeds of a hero who is courageous and sometimes superhuman. But where the epic hero's actions may be observed, even assisted by deities or demons, the romance hero is helped or hindered by magical figures—witches, sorcerers, monsters—not by the gods, as a rule. The arena of action differs, too, in that the epic hero inhabits a landscape which though so vast it might include the whole universe, is a landscape which he usually knows, although Odysseus is an exception, in that he and his men sail through waters which are unfamiliar to them. The hero of romance journeys through a landscape which might be magical, strange, or other-worldly.

> The hero of an epic, it seems, can never be at a loss to understand what is happening to him. He lives and fights in a known land against declared enemies; he has learnt his lesson and all he needs to do is to demonstrate it at the expected crisis in the expected way … . The hero of an epic, then, knows the odds he is up against and has often calculated them arithmetically; his is a desperate, doomed enterprise. Roland and Oliver and the twelve peers in the Chanson de Roland, Count Vivien in the Chancun de Willame, and others—they know their fate. But the romance-hero is like a man fighting ghosts in a mist. He is ignorant of the enemy. (Stevens, 78)

Not only is the romance hero "ignorant of the enemy," but he is, at the beginning of his quest, only potentially heroic. The epic hero is a proven warrior at the outset of his conflict; that is why he is essentially *selected* for his task.

Two other important differences distinguish the romance hero from the epic hero. First, the romance hero is often a lover as well as a fighter. As a matter of fact, the fight may be about love, as it is with Palamon and Arcite. The princes of most of the fairy tales undergo trials and complete apparently impossible tasks for the sake of love. The epic hero's love life, if he has one, is not the concern of epic literature. He is a fighter, a representative of his nation or his culture. Presumably, love is not a national concern. War is. That the epic is generally conceived as a national or cultural work of literature is the final distinction I wish to note between epic and romance. The epic hero represents a culture, and his ultimate triumph is a cultural triumph. And if he dies in combat, his funeral is a ceremonial function. The romance hero, on the other hand, is characterized by his very isolation in his quest. He does not represent a nation, for the purpose of his striving is the discovery of himself.

> The word 'heroism' … is not, in romance, simply a question of valour, of the courage which shows its true quality on the battlefield—though

> this can be a great part of it. It is integrity in a wider sense, or (to use the medieval word) 'trouthe', loyalty to the Ideal Self ... . In keeping with the whole trend of romance writing, this 'trouthe' is seen in the final instance to be an inward personal quality, individual only in the sense of belonging to Man Alone, single and solitary. (Stevens, 75)

Sir Gawain accepts the challenge of the Green Knight, not on behalf of the court of Arthur, but instead of Arthur. The shame he suffers in his subsequent betrayal of Sir Bercilak is his own. On his return, the Court are so delighted to see him again that they don green sashes, the sign of his shame, to indicate their delight at his return. But in this moment he is not the hero who has battled for the sake of the court; and he is alone in his shame (Stevens, 75-76). Reinforcing the isolation of romance characters may be their identification as psychological archetypes. As such, they function in narratives about the individual's journey to maturity, or individuation. Whereas the epic hero does battle for his state, the archetypal romance hero is, in an internal landscape, in conflict with himself.

The structure of romance bears some similarity to comedy. The romance hero and the comic hero are both often young. They are both opposed by other characters, over whom they usually win a victory. They both may, at the close of the narrative, marry. If there is no marriage at the close of the comedy, there is at least the coming together of the community in the characteristic comedic closure. Both comedy and romance are characterized by happy endings, but the experience of the comic hero and the romance hero are not identical.

> The happiness offered by romances would seem to be of this world, and, indeed, the hero's regaining what he has lost and being reunited with his love is a standard feature of the most popular English romances. Still, more important than the happy ending itself is the struggle of the hero before this ending comes about. While the happy ending insures the comic nature of romance, the comedy is actually of a Dantesque sort, in that the hero generally has to go through a purgatory of loneliness and

> pain before he is able to reach happiness. (Reiss, 117)

In comedy the obstacles to the hero's final happiness arise from within his community, and it is this community involvement which distinguishes comedy from romance. Characters in comedy, as a rule, exist and act in relationship to a society. Lady Bracknell, in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, understands her society perfectly. She blocks the marriage of her daughter Gwendolyn and John Worthing because she realizes that a foundling, his fortune notwithstanding, is not an eligible husband. Unless he is on her list of eligible bachelors, all from approved families, he can never be accepted into genteel English society; and such social ostracism is not the destiny she plans for her daughter, however much Gwendolyn may love Worthing. Lady Bracknell is not a magical evil force opposing good; she simply speaks for her society—and her voice, backed by money, position, and the power of a parent, carries loudly.

In romance, on the other hand, the hero is opposed by figures who are commonly representative of evil. He may descend into a lower world to do battle with evil and ascend ultimately to a world which is raised above human existence. In *The Secular Scripture*, Frye examines this descent and ascent pattern in what seems a vertical structure: lower world, higher world. This higher world is elevated above the world of ordinary men and women by virtue of its ideal quality. Comedy, by contrast, addresses itself in a horizontal narrative structure to societal patterns. One generation succeeds another. One king is replaced by the next.

While comedy's concerns are social, those of romance are individual. The comic hero might be likened to a politician, the romance hero to a searcher on a quest. If comedy emphasizes reason and manners, romance, in contrast, emphasizes imagination and ethics. Comedy is committed to the mean, romance to the extreme

(Hume, 142-143). It would be inaccurate, of course, to say that comedy concerns itself solely with the larger social concerns or that romance is solely about individuals. (The discussions of medieval and modern romances, which follow, will indicate otherwise.) It is true, certainly, that the narrative patterns, both of comedy and of romance, bear some similarity to each other at times. But in order to understand romance, it is necessary to examine some of the ways in which it is distinct from other forms of narrative literature.

"For all of our uncertainties about the Middle English romance," writes Reiss, "we also seem to have 'a fairly tidy sense' of it as 'a narrative poem dealing with the adventures of a chivalric hero'" (110). Reiss's almost amusing evasiveness in this statement is understandable in light of the difficulties of defining not only Middle English romance, but in defining this elusive genre in any of its manifestations. A familiarity with the characteristics common to romance does, however, give us "a fairly tidy sense" of what romance is, so that we can describe romance and recognize one when we see it. To sum up these characteristics, then:

Romance is characterized by the marvelous, the numinous, and even the magic. It addresses itself to the improbable and to the possible. Its disengagement from ordinary experience often finds expression in idealism. The essential element of its formulaic plot is adventure, usually involving struggle between the romance hero and almost overwhelming opponents who are likely to be larger and stronger than the hero. Although we willingly suspend our disbelief, we are never in doubt of the outcome of this struggle; for as Frye suggests, romance represents a displacement of myth. The patterns of mythic narratives are repeated in romance, whose characters are not the deities of myth but ideal, even superhuman persons. The adventures function as a testing, from which the victorious hero emerges with a new and strong sense of identity. The stereotypical characters of romance, who seem flat in contrast to the characters of representational fiction, are morally polarized. The good ones are very good, and the evil characters are very evil, almost beyond redemption. They seem unrealistic; but the level of realism at which they function is psychological and symbolic, not naturalistic. And the landscape in which the romance takes place is often unfamiliar in terms of place and time, providing a backdrop against which the unproven hero can prove his mettle.

Popular Romance: Medieval and Victorian

A consideration of some of the elements of the forms of romance which immediately predate the Canadian romancers enlarges our understanding of those Canadian writers and their work. The plots of romance, which resemble each other, from medieval to modern times, have already been touched on. As well, the stereotypical Canadian romance hero can claim a family resemblance to Chaucer's knights, Spenser's Red Cross Knight, or to the heroes of popular medieval and nineteenth century romances, less known to today's reader, but familiar to their contemporary readers. The majority of critics of medieval romance draw attention to the similarities between medieval and popular modern romance. And John Reed, in *Victorian Conventions*, points out that Victorian popular literature "had as much in common with medieval literature as it had with twentieth century writing" (3). Not surprisingly, then, elements of romances of other times are reflected in the romances of Canadian fiction writers at the turn of the twentieth century.

The choice of medieval and Victorian romance for comparative purposes does not at all imply that romances were not written or read between 1500 and 1830; English romance has been alive and well since its appearance in the late thirteenth century. But the medieval romance is particularly important since it is considered the prototypical form of English romance, and the Victorian romance is important to this study because the Canadian romancers are directly descended from this form. Not only are there analogous structures and characters in the medieval, Victorian, and the early twentieth century western Canadian romances, but the modern romances echo some of the motifs of the earlier forms. Moreover, the twentieth century romances have a moral design which can also be found not only in the Victorian works, but even as far back as the medieval popular romances.

Readers today are aware of such medieval romances as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Morte Darthur*, and *The Knight's Tale*. These represent the best of medieval romance, the "gems," as Richmond calls them (2). Other romances, known today primarily to medieval specialists and to graduate students grinding out dissertations, and generally considered "tedious and uninspired" (Richmond, 2), were actually more popular, and had a wide audience in their time. Determining the popularity of a medieval romance among its contemporary audience can by no means be done with the accuracy possible with modern books; even so, the existing multiple manuscripts and the lists of William Caxton's publications, as well as those of his successor, Wynken de Worde, indicate that English romances, including the "tedious and uninspired" works, were among the best sellers of their day.

As with all romances, the plots of these popular medieval romances are basically adventure after adventure. In such romances as *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*, the main characters are knights or kings or disinherited kings who do battle with the humans and dragons who are their adversaries. Not only are they fighters but lovers as well, and their commitment to the women they love is as absolute as their commitment to combat. These women usually, but not always, figure only slightly in the action of the medieval romance, for the focus is on the hero.

The range of popular romance had broadened, however, by the early nineteenth century. The invention of cheap, machine-made paper and the development of the rotary steam press contributed significantly to the proliferation of printed material; and the movement for universal education ensured an enthusiastic, but largely unsophisticated reading public. By the middle of the century, periodicals such as *The Penny Magazine* and *The Family Herald* (the British periodical which preceded the Montreal *Family Herald and Weekly Star*) enjoyed a wide circulation. One of the dominant forms of popular romance was domestic fiction, a particular favourite with female readers, who constituted a huge portion of the reading public. The heroines of these romances were often young women of exceptional moral (and often physical) beauty, whose devotion to duty and capacity for self-sacrifice boggle the mind. Or perhaps, as in Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe*, a young person, at first arrogant, is transformed through suffering, often illness (brain fever is the illness of choice). A similar narrative pattern is found in George Alfred Lawrence's *Guy Livingstone*. Religious tracts and longer fiction often focused on sensational death bed scenes. T. S. Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*, sequel to his other best seller, *Temperance Tales; or, Six Nights with the Washingtonians*, warns, with lurid detail, against the evils of alcoholic beverages. Melodrama, available in the cheap "penny dreadfuls" and in the so-called "dime novels," left little or nothing to the reader's imagination. This least complex example of nineteenth century romance was especially given to lurid tales of the criminal underworld, whose plots were shot through with coincidence and extreme circumstances, and whose characters lacked ambiguity and did not develop or change during the narrative; consequently, this kind of popular romance made the least intellectual demands of its readers. The villain in a melodrama was usually a thorough-going cad; the hero embodied all that was good and courageous; the heroine was a paragon of sweetness and moral purity. Gothic fiction, another type of nineteenth century popular romance, was set in ruined castles where frightening characters, both living and dead, played out their narratives to the background of moaning winds, creaks, groans, eerie lights and other suitably terrifying effects. There were also, of course, nineteenth century popular romances which focused on adventure, as does most of the western fiction of Canadian Ralph Connor. (In fact, James Hart, in his valuable work *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste*, includes Connor among the popular writers of outdoors fiction.)

It was the *Family Herald*, a story weekly from England which young Nellie Mooney, later Nellie McClung, was reading on a winter day in the 1880's, in the incident which she recalls in her autobiography, *Clearing in the West:*

> But I was telling about our enjoyment of the weekly newspaper. The continued story was really the high point of interest for we had a whole week to speculate on the development of the plot. There was one story that shook our neighbourhood to its foundation. It was called *Saved, or the Bride's Sacrifice*, and concerned two beautiful girls,—Jessie, fair as a lily, and Helen with blue black hair, and lustrous eyes as deep as the night. They each loved Herbert, and Herbert, being an obliging young fellow, not wishing to hurt anyone's feelings, married one secretly and hurriedly by the light of a guttering candle, in a peasant's hut, (Jessie), and one openly with a peal of organ and general high jinks, at her father's baronial castle, (Helen). This naturally brought on complications. There were storms, shipwrecks, and secret meetings in caves, with the tide rising over the rocks and curlews screaming and one

> with the evil eye. And did we love it?
>
> I can remember staggering along through the snow behind the sleigh reading the story as I walked, and when I drew near home, members of the family would come out to shout at me to hurry. (*Clearing,*182)

To understand the analogous qualities of medieval and Victorian popular romance, it is illuminating to examine them side by side. *Guy of Warwick*, the most popular medieval romance, and *The Lamplighter*, a nineteenth century American domestic romance which was enormously popular, will serve nicely. Guy's courage and good manners are typical of the medieval romance hero. For him, the evil to be fought is represented by giants, dragons, and infidels. And most of this combat takes place on the Continent, which, for him, is a strange place. Gertrude, protagonist of *The Lamplighter*, first appears as a homely eight-year-old. Her conversion to Christianity and her subsequent life of service and sacrifice bring her not only the remarkable moral beauty so common to nineteenth century heroines of domestic romance, but physical beauty as well. Her beauty evolves as a result of suffering. Unlike Guy, she does not combat literal, but metaphoric dragons: Nan, who evicts Gertrude and who burns her cat; Isabel, who is filled with hatred of Gertrude. Like Guy, she is triumphant. Since readers are not familiar with either book, I shall begin with plot summaries.

Guy, son of the steward to the Earl of Warwick, yearns for the love of Felice, daughter of the Earl. When he declares his love to her, she points out the disparity of their social ranks and declines to return his ardour. Guy then requests knighthood of the Earl, and this is granted. Sir Guy again declares his love to Felice, who replies that he is an unproven knight, and she again declines. Guy travels to the Continent, where he distinguishes himself, and returns to England, where, almost incidentally, he slays a dragon on his way back to Warwick Castle. He does not need to ask Felice's hand in marriage, for the Earl is so impressed with Guy's knightly accomplishments that he offers Felice to Guy as his bride. Shortly after the marriage and the begetting of an heir, Guy ascends a tower one summer evening, views the surrounding country, and suddenly becomes aware of man's insignificance in the eyes of God. This spiritual revelation motivates him to undertake another journey, to the Holy Land, this time anonymously, as a pilgrim. Significantly, he tells Felice that he is undertaking this journey for the health of both of their souls. His pilgrimage to the Holy Land, as on his first journey , includes many brave feats; the difference is that on this journey he declines to identify himself as anything more than a pilgrim. Returning at last to England, he discovers that Felice has given her wealth and continues to devote her time to the poor near Warwick Castle. Guy lives as a hermit near the castle, not identifying himself to Felice until shortly before his death. After a brief reunion, Guy dies, and Felice dies shortly thereafter. They are buried side by side.

Maria Cummins' domestic romance *The Lamplighter* was first published in 1854. It begins as eight-year-old Gerty, an orphan, is thrown out onto the street by the mean spirited Nan Grant, but not before Nan hurls Gerty's beloved kitten into a pan of boiling water. Gertrude becomes a Christian. Trueman Flint, the lamplighter, takes Gerty to his own home, where Gerty lives for several years, growing to regard Flint as a beloved grandfather. She becomes good friends with neighbours Mrs. Sullivan and her son, Willie Sullivan, as well as Mr. Cooper, father of Mrs. Sullivan. After the death of Trueman Flint, Gerty goes to live with the Sullivans, where she nurses Mr. Cooper in his terminal illness, and then Mrs. Sullivan in her terminal illness. Willie, meanwhile, has gone out to Calcutta to assume a junior clerk's position in the employ of Mr. Clinton. After Mrs. Sullivan's death, Gerty goes to live with blind Miss Emily Graham and her father, a widower, where she serves as a companion to Emily and attends an excellent school. Because of her education, maturity, and gracefulness, Gerty is eventually known in the Graham household as Gertrude, even Miss Gertrude. Eventually Mr. Graham remarries, and the new Mrs. Graham moves into the Graham household, bringing her two nieces. Isabel takes an instant dislike to the now grown up and much admired Gertrude, and Kitty is silly and superficial until Gertrude helps her to outgrow her childish ways. On a boat trip Gertrude risks almost certain death to save the life of Isabel, the young lady who so obviously dislikes Gertrude. Since Gertrude believes that Isabel and Willie are in love, and since Gertrude herself loves Willie, her self-sacrifice is intensified. Willie, it turns out, however, has always loved Gertrude. He returns from Calcutta, inherits the estate of an eccentric woman whom he had assisted years before on an icy day in Boston, and marries Gertrude. Wealthy Philip Amory, who is Gertrude's long lost father and an old suitor of Miss Emily, returns and marries Miss Emily, despite her protests that she is not long for this world. Kitty marries a widower clergyman whose unattractive little daughter Gertrude had befriended months earlier on the boat trip. Mr. and Mrs. Graham and Isabel, a changed woman since Gertrude saved her life, move into a house together and live amicably in Boston.

On first consideration the two romances, one written more than 500 years after the other, seem vastly different. Much of the action in *Guy of Warwick* is made up of confrontations between Guy and a seemingly endless series of adversaries, including giants and dragons, too numerous to include in a plot summary. In contrast, *The*

Lamplighter, a domestic romance, is set in various homes in the Boston area, the one exception being a boat trip on the Hudson River. The focus is on the home, especially on the importance of women in the home. But in order to suggest how characteristics of medieval and nineteenth century romance are each part of an ongoing tradition, I have chosen two different kinds of romance, the chivalric medieval romance and the Victorian domestic romance. To be sure, Connor and Stead did not write domestic romance, the sort which focuses on women's lives. Adventure romances certainly were published in the nineteenth century, but the domestic romance was the most widely published and read. And although the heroines of these popular romances do not travel as widely as their male counterparts in adventure romances, or experience as much physical peril, their metaphoric journeys involve moral testing, moral triumph, and marriage to a wealthy husband on the final page.

An obvious difference between these two romances lies in their contrasting treatment of male and female characters. In *Guy of Warwick* Felice, Guy's wife, is a very minor character who remains at Warwick Castle, while Guy travels and has adventures, although his pilgrimage is taken, he says, as much for her sake as his own. This focus on the male romance hero was certainly typical of the medieval period, and central to courtly literature. The conventional idealization of character and behavior of the romance hero, primarily in the two areas of prowess and love, is focused on courteous, or courtly, behavior in combat and in tournaments.

Conventional, too, is the expectation that the romance hero's behavior to women will reflect the tradition of courtly love. This codified behavior includes exhibiting good manners and avoiding any churlish comments or deeds. He compliments his lady love, gives her tokens of his affection, sings songs in praise of her, participates in tournaments for her sake, and goes on crusades in order to be worthy of her. In short, his waking hours are spent in trying to please her, and his sleeping hours in dreaming of her. (In the early stages of this love he sleeps very little at night, during which hours his thoughts dwell on her beauty and virtue and on what he believes is his unworthiness of her.) It should be noted that although the courtly lover is absorbed in his attentions to the lady, she herself is quite minor as a character; in fact, she is more an idea than a character.

Being so in love does more than turn the young man into an ardent lover; this codified, courtly love is perceived as ennobling, as engendering *gentilesse,* that Middle English term which denotes not only gentility of birth, but of character as well. In fact, within the chivalric tradition, the knight's worthiness as a lover is linked with his success in the art of combat. The true courtly lover is a model of chivalric behavior in tournaments of war, and the knight who subscribes to sportsmanship and fair play, a worthy courtly lover. The wider implication of this is that attention to such codified behavior, whether in love or in combat, ensures a civilized society. And although Guy rises from his position as son of the Earl's steward to become a knight, a member of the aristocracy, he is by no means a member of a democratic society.

In *The Lamplighter,* as in most domestic romances of the nineteenth century, the major characters are women, and the domestic interests and expertise of women determine the setting and action of this romance.

> Because women were the rulers of the home and home was where the novel was read, fiction came more and more to concern itself with women and their special world. It excluded business (husbands daily disappeared from fiction to enter some remote, uncharted world where they earned money); it neglected politics (civic affairs and the structure of a democracy were seemingly impolite parlor topics); it was ignorant

> of social movements (incoming immigrants and westward-moving pioneers were merely quaint characters used for contrast with the normal middle class); and ethical or theological problems were viewed only in the simplest Sunday School terms. (Hart, 90-91)

Only once in *The Lamplighter* is there a reference to the fact that Emily's father, Mr. Graham, is a director of a bank. He appears chiefly at home. We know what kind of breakfast he eats, that he wishes to have the newspaper read to him by Gertrude, and that he takes pride in his garden. One obvious reason for this focus on the home is that women constituted a huge proportion of the readers of romance; it was good business sense to focus on what was considered women's "proper sphere." Then, too, many of the writers of these nineteenth century best sellers were women. But not all of the incidents in the domestic romance are centred on the skills women presumably have in caring for others. Gertrude takes care of every other character in *The Lamplighter*, considering this her duty. But she does more than that: she is a successful teacher as well. Granted, whenever another character is sick, dying, or in need of companionship, Gertrude selflessly takes a leave of absence from teaching to become a nurse or confidant. Still, she has a career and is partially reflective of the New Woman of the nineteenth century, whose identity is not wholly derived from domestic duties.

Although the popular medieval and Victorian romances differ in terms of plot and in the treatment of female characters, they are far more alike than these differences might suggest. First of all, they have been held in almost unanimous contempt by critics. *Tedious*, *trivial*, and *uninspired* are words which have routinely been used by critics to describe medieval popular romances. And in the nineteenth century Nathaniel Hawthorne, after reading *The Lamplighter*, complained bitterly to his publisher:

> America is now wholly given over to a d——d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash—and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed. What is the mystery of these innumerable editions of the 'Lamplighter,' and other books neither better nor worse?—worse they could not be, and better they need not be, when they sell by the 100,000. (Ticknor, 141-142)

Hawthorne's publisher, Ticknor reports, did not answer his question, but sent him a box of apples. Maria Cummins, author of *The Lamplighter*, probably laughed all the way to the bank. Hawthorne's opinion of *The Lamplighter* might not have changed, but his next letter to his editor on the subject of these "scribbling women" was considerably softer in its judgment:

> I bestowed some vituperation on female authors. I have since been reading 'Ruth Hall'; and I must say I enjoyed it a good deal. The woman writes as if the Devil was in her; and that is the only condition under which a woman ever writes anything worth reading ... Can you tell me anything about this Fanny Fern? If you meet her, I wish you would let her know how much I admire her. (Ticknor, 143)

Hawthorne does not reveal why he admired Fanny Fern, one of the most successful American writers of popular romance in the nineteenth century. One might hope that he admired qualities in her fiction which are shared by all romances, no matter when they are written.

But being held in critical contempt is hardly enough to make two works related. There are other similarities between the two romances and between the two protagonists. Guy and Gertrude are both young and inexperienced at the beginning of their narratives. Each undergoes a lengthy period of testing: Guy, in his travels on the Continent, an unfamiliar place to him; and Gertrude, on a boat trip on the Hudson River and on her metaphoric journey from being an abused orphan to her becoming a cherished wife and mother. Like Guy's journey to the Continent, Gertrude's metaphoric journey includes experiences quite new to her. Each demonstrates the capacity for courage and self-sacrifice. If Guy successfully fights a giant and several dragons, Gertrude endures the cruelty of Nan and not only endures the hatred and cruelty of Isabel, but wins Isabel's love and admiration.

The differing attitudes toward male and female characters in the popular medieval and Victorian romances have already been discussed. In matters of decorum, male and female characters, whether in medieval or Victorian romance, adhere to a code of civilized behavior which represents the ideal in their respective eras and which is a principal component in the conduct of life and in the vision of an ordered society. This desire, this passion for order may well be the key to understanding the enduring popularity of romance. The ordering of private experience as well as that of the larger society reflects a moral order. The wish for the triumph of good over evil, the righting of wrongs, and happy outcomes for the good characters may, to a large degree, determine the formulaic structure of romance. Reiss comments that "the marriages that conclude so many romances ... are less a sign of growing up than evidence of fulfillment, as though through this sacrament in which human union is consecrated, man orders his passions and sets right his world" (119).

This focus on the ideal results in an elitism which is characteristic of medieval and Victorian romance:

> The romance is the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream, and for that reason it has socially a curiously paradoxical role. In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and the beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy. This is the general character of chivalric romance in the Middle Ages, aristocratic romance in the Renaissance, bourgeois

> romance since the eighteenth century, and revolutionary romance in contemporary Russia. (Frye, *Anatomy*, 186)

Guy, the son of a steward, aspires to knighthood because he loves the daughter of the Earl of Warwick, a member of the dominant social class. Gertrude, a presumed orphan at the beginning of *The Lamplighter*, rises from poverty to genteel upper middle class status through her association with the Graham family, a reflection of the upward mobility which was part of the ideals of their respective cultures. Wealth, too, was basic to these two romances and to the societies whose ideals they represented: Guy and Gertrude are not only elevated in social class by the ends of these romances, but they are considerably wealthier. (True, Guy embraces poverty, but this is a matter of choice which only the rich have.)

This elitism may be seen as well in the fiction of Connor and Stead. Gerald Friesen comments that the officers of the North West Mounted Police were usually from the "better" families of eastern Canada, and not from Britain, as their fictional counterparts were. Nonetheless, fictional and real Mountie officers came from the elite. Allan Cameron, the son of a Scottish gentleman, is not an officer—he enters the North West Mounted Police as Private Cameron, but in *Corporal Cameron* and *The Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail*, advances quickly in rank. The nurses in *Corporal Cameron* who travel to the West bring with them china tea cups and saucers. Shock McGregor is a university graduate. Stead's Raymond Burton, who recites poetry at a party in western Canada, is understood by only one guest, the woman he eventually marries. However much the fictional Canadian characters might speak of a new society in which each person has the opportunity to prosper, the assumption seems to be that the new western Canadians, especially those who have immigrated from Eastern European countries, will adopt English ways, and that those who aspire to positions of wealth and responsibility will eventually speak English with an upper class accent and learn to ride to hounds.

Medieval and Victorian romances are concerned with moral order. (This, it may be remembered, distinguishes them from comedy.) Didactic passages in medieval, Victorian, and Canadian romances as well provide explicit evidence of this concern. Guy is given to comments on the necessity of piety. *The Lamplighter* is shot through with almost interminable reminders that Gertrude considers her duty to other people and her duty to God to be her priorities. One example will suffice:

> She has locked the doors, made all things safe, fast and comfortable, and now sits down to read, to meditate, and pray. Her trials and cares are multiplying. A great grief stares her in the face, and a great responsibility; but she shrinks not from either. No! on the contrary, she thanks God that she is here; that she had the resolution to forsake pleasure and ease, and, in spite of her own weakness and man's wrath, to place herself in the front of life's battle, and bravely wait its issues. She thanks God that she knows where to look for help; that the bitter sorrows of her childhood and early youth left her not without a witness of His love who can turn darkness into light, and that no weight can now overshadow her whose gloom is not illumined by rays from the throne of God. (p. 345)

Didactic passages such as this clearly indicate the moral purpose. A more significant evidence of such moral purpose, however, is implicit in the moral design of the narrative. Trueman Flint, who was befriended as an orphan child, in turn befriends Gertrude. Gertrude, after becoming a Christian, is, through her unselfish devotion to God and to duty, ultimately instrumental in improving the lot of nearly every character in the book. True, she is doing what is considered women's work, but she is also acting out the golden rule and demonstrating Christlike behavior. And she is rewarded for this commitment. Her economic status improves. She marries the man she loves. Most important, though, is her nearly miraculous transformation from the orphan girl whose ugliness is laughed at by other children to the graceful young woman whose attractiveness is noted by those who once tormented her for her looks. It seems clear that Gertrude's moral beauty has engendered this physical transformation, and that both moral and physical beauty have come about because of all that Gertrude has suffered.

A moral design is implicit in *Guy of Warwick*, although it is not so obvious as it is in *The Lamplighter*. To the cynical modern eye, *Guy of Warwick* may seem merely a pious vehicle for repetitive knightly adventures; and this, more or less, is the eye with which most critics view it. Velma Richmond, however, takes a dissenting position, devoting an entire chapter of her book (pp. 149-193) to a close reading of this romance. Her reading yields a poem whose moral framework provides logical links between what other critics consider unrelated episodes. She points out that Guy on his first Continental journey differs markedly from the person he becomes after his spiritual regeneration in the tower. Before the tower experience he is arrogant, egotistical, even savage. But the experience in the tower changes him. Richmond particularly notes that this change comes about not through any supernatural revelation, but through his own perceptions. She compares his recognition, albeit in an almost mystical experience, of his human failing to that of Sir Gawain after his encounter with the Green Knight (p. 154). The changed Sir Guy of the second journey demonstrates his new commitment through his humility, his new ability to forgive rather than to seek revenge, his putting the interests of others above his own, and not merely through his verbal claims to Christian motivation. His leaving his pregnant wife in order to journey on his pilgrimage might seem selfish. But, as Richmond points out, the ability of a married couple to value spiritual concerns above worldly, physical satisfaction was not only a significant part of the medieval Christian view, but this development in their relationship blends with the larger moral concerns of the romance (187-188). Moreover, Felice, in his absence, also undergoes a spiritual change, turning her back on worldly wealth and concentrating instead on the claims of the higher world.

At the level of mythical displacement, there is more than a suggestion that Guy functions as a Christ figure, and this is not unusual, since the life of Christ became a frequent pattern for the heroes of medieval romance. Richmond, of course, has noted that as Guy leaves Felice for his pilgrimage on the Continent, he assures her that his pilgrimage is undertaken for her benefit as well as his own:

> Euyr schalt þou, wythouten fayl
> Have half þe mede of my trauayle. (ll. 7183-4)

In a small way Guy is taking responsibility for the shortcomings of another person. A passage in which Guy's experience parallels that of Christ during his crucifixion has not been included by Richmond in her discussion, but it seems significant. While on his pilgrimage, Guy does combat with more than one giant. On one such occasion the giant injures Guy's side, and the wording of the manuscript (Ff.2.38, Cambridge University Library) seems to indicate that the injury is a *piercing* of Guy's side, as Christ's side was pierced:

> Wyth that he brake an hole wyde
> And woundyd Guy in the syde. (ll. 8162-3)

Gertrude functions, as well, as a Christ figure at one point in ***The Lamplighter***. (Elsewhere in the romance she is merely a saint.) On a steamboat trip on the Hudson river, a fire which destroys the boat forces the passengers to abandon the vessel. Gertrude stands on the deck, awaiting Philip Amory, who has swum to shore with

Emily and is returning for Gertrude. Standing beside Gertrude is the helpless and terrified Isabel Clinton, easily the nastiest character in this romance and the one most in need of redemption. Removing her large hat, the object by which Phillip said he would recognize her through the smoke, Gertrude places it on Isabel's head and pushes her off the burning boat and into Phillip's waiting arms. Then, escaping the flames, Gertrude, who cannot swim, leaps into the water and into what the reader assumes is certain death.

Both the courtly values of the medieval romance and the domestic concerns of some of the nineteenth century romances are echoed in the Canadian romances. Much of this fiction is set in a time earlier than the time of writing. The protagonists of Ralph Connor's western fiction must have seemed to Connor's worldwide audience like adventurers in an exotic place. They respect, even revere, women. And their demonstrated abilities as athletes are reminiscent of the prowess of the medieval adventurers. Home in the Connor fiction is the domain of saintly mothers, archetypal wise old women. It is the place from which the protagonist leaves for his western experience, and the place to which he returns for rest. Stead's ranchers and homesteaders are tested by prairie fires, the hardships of homesteading, and, most of all, the lure of materialism.

The appeal of *Guy of Warwick* and *The Lamplighter* to the audiences of their times is puzzling to the modern reader, who may find these romances quaint or tedious or downright boring; for though popular romance evokes archetypal patterns and timeless truths of the unconscious mind, it is by nature tied to the concerns of its time. It reflects an ideal contemporary lifestyle, confirms the values of its time, and perhaps responds to what its audience perceive as threats to the permanence of their lives. The upward mobility of medieval society, in which members of the growing middle class could prosper and acquire titles, is mirrored in Guy. His courage in combat on his first trip to the Continent confirms his credibility as a knight. But the cradle-to-grave influence of the medieval Church is mirrored in Guy's second journey, when he travels as a pilgrim, eschewing wealth and comfort on the journey and upon his return to Warwick. Perhaps this dominance of the Church in *Guy of Warwick* reflects not only the importance of the medieval church to its culture, but the anxieties of a people whose church had become corrupt and who may have been uneasy about their future.

If the life and teachings of Christ are a pattern for Guy, they also direct Gertrude's behavior, once she becomes a Christian. Her greatest virtue is her willingness to sacrifice, evident in her nursing the sick and apparently giving up the man she loves to another woman. Christ's sacrificial death is echoed in her giving up her own life in order that Isabel, the woman who hates her, might live. Yet it should be remembered that contemporary with the 1854 publication of *The Lamplighter* were threats to Christian belief: Higher Criticism challenged the docrine of the divine inspiration of the Bible; geological discoveries questioned the Genesis narrative of creation; and in England, the Utilitarians claimed that belief in any deity was merely superstition. It is no wonder, then, that this popular romance so tenaciously embraces Christian belief.

Interestingly enough, both this medieval romance and the Victorian romance implicitly approve of Guy's and Gertrude's financial prosperity. Commoner Guy needs a title so that he can marry Felice, daughter of the wealthy Earl of Warwick. Guy does not choose poverty as a way of life until after he has acquired property; he is able to make the choice between the two. So this romance manages to reinforce the value of money and of piety; and the literary approval of retaining money while embracing religion may partly account for its enormous popularity. Like Guy, Gertrude is also able to combine piety and prosperity. Her advance in social standing begins shortly after she becomes a Christian, when Trueman Flint offers her a home. And directly following her apparent sacrificing of herself to save Isabel, Gertrude's beloved Willie returns from India, inherits a fortune, and marries Gertrude. The juxtaposition of sacrifice and the acquisition of wealth suggest their importance in the nineteenth century.

The importance of religious belief and a desire to be rich continue to be among the significant values of the twentieth century, and so they are not strange to us. But the process through which Guy must go to marry Felice seems foreign to the modern mind. And Gertrude's focus on the comforts of the Graham family seems quaintly old fashioned, particularly to the career woman of today. Modern readers have their own romances, which will probably seem outdated to readers a century from now. But in the late medieval and the Victorian worlds, both beset by the uncertainty and change which are common to human experience in any era, the ordered, dependable worlds of Guy and Felice and Gertrude, within which adventure could safely take place, must have come as a balm to their audiences.

Chapter Two

The Western Fiction of Ralph Connor

Although critical assessment of Ralph Connor's twenty-four fictional works varies, critics are agreed on one point: these once popular books, which sold more than five million copies, are now known more for their historical and cultural interest than for their literary appeal. But nearly a century ago Connor, the pseudonym for the Rev. Charles W. Gordon, was known not only in Canada, but as far away as Australia.[1] He was a favourite author of American presidents and at least one British prime minister. His popularity declined in the 1920's, however, and today most of Connor's books are out of print and virtually unknown to the reading public.

Critics, such as John Moss, who assess Connor's popular romances by the standards of the novel, find them lacking in merit. But the best of the modern critical studies of Connor's work focus on its great appeal; they explore, instead, its intense popularity. A measure of this popularity, as well as its world-wide extent, can be seen in photograph seven in Appendix A. Here, at a bookstall in Melbourne, Australia, the recent publication of Connor's *Corporal Cameron* is advertised in several huge posters which dominate the photograph.

Connor's audience included many who had grown up reading the popular fiction of the Victorian period and who now enjoyed the local colour fiction of Bret Harte and Mark Twain. They welcomed Connor's narratives of adventure in the Canadian west, an area then only thinly settled. Then, too, Connor's western fiction appealed to a large audience because it confirmed the pro-British values of the expansionist movement, whose leaders had strongly urged that Canada acquire the North West

Territory from The Hudson's Bay Company and develop it as an economic and cultural hinterland to central Canada. A third characteristic of Connor's fiction which gave it a wide appeal in its time was that the virtuous characters, who were almost always handsome or beautiful, lived happily ever after. The bad characters were normally caught and punished; after a suitable remorse, they were converted to Christian belief.

These three characteristics of Connor's fiction are common to popular fiction in any era: the reflection of already established conventions from an earlier literary period; subject matter which addresses current issues and confirms the values of the audience; and the sort of justice which Frye associates with romance's "persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space" (*Anatomy*, 186). Connor's fiction does reflect an "imaginative golden age" in an undeveloped Canadian West. He wrote popular romances, not novels; and it is only within the framework of romance that his work can properly be assessed.

The works which are the focus of this chapter are Connor's frontier fiction and fiction set in western Canada. His early books envision a western Canada awaiting settlement. His first book, *Black Rock: a Tale of the Selkirks* (1898), is a series of sketches Connor was persuaded to write about his missionary work in the West. *Black Rock* was followed the next year by *The Sky Pilot: a Tale of the Foothills*, about missionary work in the Alberta foothills. Connor's next two books, *The Man from Glengarry: a Tale of the Ottawa* (1901) and *Glengarry School Days: a Tale of Early Days in Glengarry* (1902), are set in eastern Ontario (then Canada West) during Connor's childhood in the 1860's. Although they are not set in the Canadian West, as are the other Connor books examined in this study, they are properly frontier fiction (Ontario was then a frontier); and they feature characters who later became the archetypal prairie figures of the minister, the minister's wife, and the schoolteacher. For those reasons I include them here. *The Prospector: a Tale of the Crow's Nest Pass* (1904) and *The Doctor: a Tale of the Rockies* (1906), like *The Sky Pilot*, are about missionaries who leave their eastern homes to serve in the Canadian West. As well, the doctor in *The Doctor*, brother to the missionary, heads west to work. Set during the North West Rebellion, *Corporal Cameron* (1912) and its sequel, *The Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail* (1914), present another standard Connor character, eventually a prairie archetype, the Mountie. *The Foreigner: a Tale of Saskatchewan* (1909) follows the rising fortunes of a young Russian immigrant, from the slums of Winnipeg to success in Saskatchewan.

The four remaining books, *The Major* (1917), *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* (1919), *To Him that Hath: a Novel of the West Today* (1921), and *The Gaspards of Pine Croft: a Romance of the Windermere* (1923), are not properly frontier fiction, although they are set at least partly in the Canadian West; and they illuminate Connor's vision of order. *The Major* and *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* are about World War I, the former a plea for Canadian involvement in the War, the latter a surprisingly powerful book about the need to offer fit bodies for sacrifice in war. Although *To Him that Hath* is ostensibly set in Ontario—the two or three references to geographical location are buried in the middle of the book and easy to miss—it is actually about the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, in whose settlement Connor was involved. And *The Gaspards of Pine Croft*, whose tortuous plot is almost impossible to follow, begins at the end of the settlement process. Its emphasis on Eastern and Old World values as a necessity of civilized order in the West constitutes its value. Finally, *Postscript to Adventure: the Autobiography of Ralph Connor* (1938) illuminates

Connor's fiction by providing biographical information on which some of the fiction is based, and by articulating Connor's attitudes. Moreover, since the style of the autobiography is relatively free of the didacticism and sentimentality which characterize his fiction, it seems reasonable to infer that Connor made a distinction between the *style* of non-fiction and the *style* of fiction, locating his fictional works within the tradition of Victorian popular romance.

Ralph Connor was a busy man.[2] For forty-three years he was was the minister at St. Stephen's Presbyterian (later United) Church in Winnipeg, during which time he served as chaplain in the front lines of World War I, was elected Moderator of Canada's Presbyterian General Assembly, and was actively involved in the formation of the United Church of Canada. That this astonishing man had time to write at all is remarkable. Recent reprints of several of his books continue to have limited appeal, primarily in university courses in Canada and the United States. Critical comment on Connor's fiction is mixed, not just because of the range of approaches, but because some critics evaluate Connor's fiction by the standards of the novel, and some by the standards of popular romance. Their lack of agreement about the kind of fiction Connor wrote contributes to the conflicting assessments. Edward McCourt, John Moss, J. Lee Thompson and John H. Thompson, Roy Daniells, F. W. Watt, and Dick Harrison have all provided significant commentary on Connor's work.

Edward McCourt, an early and now outdated critic of Connor's work, is among those who have tried to account for the phenomenal popularity of his fiction as well as its sharp decline from public favour in the 1920's. He envisions Connor as a writer whose popularity arose from his seeing the Canadian west as a "land of promise, a land of romance," a place "of beginning again," a place where "transformation" and "regeneration" are possible. Then, too, McCourt notes that the moral simplicity of the characters of this fiction no doubt appealed to the romantic notions of the average reader. And because most of Connor's books include some sort of physical challenge, whether in the form of a football game or a tavern brawl, "it is easy to understand Ralph Connor's appeal to the kind of audience which today gets its vicarious thrills from telecast showings of mayhem on the ice in the Maple Leaf Gardens" (32). And finally, comments McCourt, Connor's firm belief in the superiority of British tradition contributed to his vast readership. "In an age when, as Lytton Strachey has it, imperialism was a faith as well as a business, his confidence in the generally beneficent nature of the white man's rule was no doubt reassuring to his readers in Eastern Canada and the Old Country" (33).

As far as McCourt's comments go, he is probably correct in his assessment of Connor's popularity, but his interpretation of the subsequent falling of readership seems problematic. McCourt suggests that the sharp decline was affected by the spiritual malaise which characterized the post-war decade of the 1920's, "the decade of Hemingway and T. S. Eliot and the Lost Generation" (33). For a minority of Connor's audience this was probably true. It should be remembered, however, that the decade of the 1920's was also the decade of evangelist Billy Sunday and the fundamentalism which gave rise to the Scopes Monkey Trial, the decade of *Babbitt* and *Main Street*. But McCourt seems to miss something when he comments that "even a generation brought up on soap operas is likely to find Ralph Connor's sentimentality out of date, just as his Doctor, Barney Boyle, lacks the glamour interest of the Caseys and Kildares and Corwins who weekly display their professional and other talents on TV" (41). If the TV audience of the 1950's medical romance shows found Connor's doctor to be dated, the audience of "China Beach" and "St. Elsewhere" find Drs. Casey and Kildare, whom McCourt cites as modern characters, equally outdated. That is the nature of popular romance. Its appeal is temporary; even though it deals with timeless issues, its incidents, characters, themes, and style are linked with the fashions and issues of its time.

John Moss confines his vituperative comments on Connor to *The Man from Glengarry*, which he feels is the best of a bad lot of ***novels*** (italics mine):

> This novel is too banal to be an adolescent adventure yarn, yet too adolescent to be a novel for adults. Connor's prose style is cloying, forced, and extravagant. His characters are not defined well enough to be caricatures; instead, each is a cluster of cliches built around a simplistic concept of ethnicity, age, sex, or moral "type." The narrative voice (and the author behind it) is pretentious, patronizing, chauvinistic, racist, and rigidly self-righteous. (52)

It is true that the characters are stereotypical, that dialogue is wooden, and that Connor's depiction of the French loggers is "simplistic." What Moss ignores altogether is the story line. Connor was a good story teller; and as in all popular romance, plot is most important, since characters, as a rule, do tend to be two-dimensional. That Moss is judging Connor's book on the basis of its characters indicates that he is judging it as a novel and not as the popular romance it is. It is unfortunate that this assessment appears in a book entitled *A Reader's Guide to the Canadian Novel.*

If Moss ignores plot, he does at least recognize the underlying principles of the plot: "God is on the side of good, right is might, and the bad shall fall to waste and perdition. ... It [the book] effectively recognizes the powerful relationship of Glengarry to the Dominion and God; it acknowledges their common aspirations, each for the other" (52-53). These are indeed some of the values of Connor's readership, though Moss does not seem to make the connection between these values of Connor's fiction and the values of his audience.

J. Lee Thompson and John H. Thompson think that the importance of Connor's fiction lies in its reflection of the search for a Canadian identity. They focus, however, on weak or absurd British characters in this fiction, characters such as Edgar Penny of *The Foreigner*, or Joe Wigglesworth, the constant complainer of *To Him That Hath*, quite ignoring Connor's pro-British bias. It is true, as the Thompsons point out, that Connor describes the Company of the Noble Seven as men who, "freed from the restraints of custom and surrounding, soon shed all that was superficial in their make-up and stood forth in the naked simplicity of their native manhood" (*Sky Pilot*, 27). But they apparently ignore other passages in the same paragraph which state that the seven men were "of the best blood of Britain." They were "well born and delicately bred in that atmosphere of culture mingled with a sturdy common sense and a certain high chivalry which surrounds the stately homes of Britain." And at Ashley Ranch, the western Canadian home of the Hon. Fred Ashley and his wife the Lady Charlotte,

> the traditions of Ashley Court were preserved as far as possible. The Hon. Fred appeared at the wolf-hunts in riding breeches and top boots, with hunting crop and English saddle, while in all the appointments of the house the customs of the English home were observed. (27-28)

If the Noble Seven have rid themselves of the restraints of British custom, the Hon. Fred, son of a Lord, has not. Not only is he prospering, but the language of this passage indicates that Connor approves. The sky pilot himself, Arthur Wellington Moore, couldn't have a more British name. The Thompsons select *The Foreigner* as Connor's best work of fiction, and they cite his statement in the preface to that book, which celebrates a new race of men: "Out of breeds diverse in traditions, in ideals, in speech, and in manner of life, Saxon and Slav, Teuton, Celt and Gaul, one people is being made. The blood strains of great races will mingle in the blood of a race greater than the greatest of them all." Fine words, indeed. But they are undercut by what Brown, the Presbyterian missionary, says later in the book: "[The Galicians] must be taught our ways of thinking and living, or it will be a mighty bad thing for us in Western Canada" (255).

It is true, I think, that *The Foreigner* does address the issue of identity, as the Thompsons suggest. To Connor's immediate audience the issue was national identity, and the conclusions in *The Foreigner*, although xenophobic to present day readers, affirmed the dominant values of Connor's public. But at a deeper level, the level at which romance ultimately functions, it is *personal* identity that is the issue, and it is at this level that their observation that "the novels of Ralph Connor transcend the sentimentality and triteness which sometimes mar them individually" (160), takes on significance. The young, unproven person, whether Presbyterian missionary or Ukrainian immigrant, travels to the Canadian West and comes to understand himself as he confronts unfamiliar places and people. The repetition of this archetypal narrative of transformation, retold generation after generation for hundreds of years, contributes to Connor's importance.

Roy Daniells and F. W. Watt, whose essays appear in Donald Stephens' *Writers of the Prairies*, have written illuminating articles about Connor's fiction. Daniells examines *The Man from Glengarry* and *Glengarry Schooldays*, juxtaposing them with Connor's autobiography, *Postscript to Adventure*. Daniells perceives in the fictional works a "transcendence" of the reality presented in the autobiography, and the creation of a dreamlike primeval forest in which magic and archetypal figures function.

His interpretation, as well as that of Watt, gets to the heart of what is so engaging about Connor's fiction, for these two critics address the metaphoric level of this fiction. Daniells identifies the religion of the residents of Connor's Glengarry forest as the most important element in these two fictional works. Religion, combined with region and ethnic background, he says, "produces the magic thread, fastened to some archetypal bole in the depth of Connor's dream forest and giving him in all subsequent times and remote places a sure tug of orientation toward his centre of reference" (19).

Watt's approach to Connor's fiction bears some similarity to that of Daniells in that he examines it in terms of its idealism and mythic qualities, but his is a wider approach, since he considers a greater number of Connor's books than does Daniells. In addition, Watt attempts to account for Connor's tremendous and temporary popularity. Noting that Connor chose to write about the West at the time of its passing, Watt suggests that Connor saw in the midst of this change truths which are changeless. He focused, says Watt, on the nature of man, the ageless contest "between good and evil, Christian and Hopeful and Mr. Valiant-for-truth against the forces of Appolyon and the temptations of Vanity Fair" (15) (As a matter of fact, the epilogue to Connor's autobiography is the passage from *Pilgrim's Progress* in which Mr. Valiant-for-truth receives his summons, passes through the deep river, and, as the trumpets sound for him, to the other side.) Connor's West, comments Watt, "was a place where biblical parables easily merged with actuality" (14). Watt attributes Connor's brief popularity chiefly to the timeliness of his fiction—at a time when huge numbers of immigrants were heading out of the crowded cities of Europe and eastern North America, much national attention was focused on the West—and notes that Connor's West became a mythic region of promise, of possibilities, where prodigal men, under the influence of ideal women and committed clergy, could undergo transformation and redemption.

Watt's comments on the temporary popularity of Connor's fiction are, it seems to me, partly valid. Fiction which envisions good men and women triumphing over the machinations of evil characters must certainly have appealed to an audience who feared the loss of traditional values in a time of change. And Doug Owram's study of the expansionist movement in Canada, with its emphasis on the possibilities of development which the West offered, validates Watt's description of Connor's West as "a mythic region of promise, of possibilities ... ." But the conclusion of Watt's essay is disappointing, for he finally places Connor's fiction within the development of the Canadian novel; and since he claims that it falls short of the "artistic integrity" and "probability" of later fiction, Watt perceives that the decline in popularity of Connor's fiction was inevitable. In fact, all of these critics refer to Connor's books as "novels," a term of reference which becomes problematic for them in assessing Connor's importance as a writer. In chapter four of *Unnamed Country,* in which he discusses the fiction of Connor, McClung, Stringer, and Stead, Dick Harrison identifies "the infinite, the eternal, and the ineffable" as "traditionally the terms and concerns of romance" (75). He prefers the term *romance* to *novel* in his discussion of Connor's fiction.

Furthermore, he suggests that the Edenic garden myth which provides the ideology for Connor's fiction includes "a hazy identification of the human order of empire, the natural order, and the divine order" (79). This association of the three kinds of order, it may be remembered, is reflected by other critics of romance, including Northrop Frye, John Stevens, and others. Harrison implies that Connor's sustained romantic vision of the early Canadian West is made possible by the absence of the farming pioneers, "the figures logically at the centre of the garden of the West . . ." (89). Moreover, he refers to Connor's fiction as "popular" (80), and to Connor's views as "no more than the popular conviction" (82). This recognition of Connor's fiction (and the fiction of other popular writers) as ***popular*** fiction or ***popular romance*** (italics mine), goes far, I think, in explaining the wide readership as well as the decline in readership of Connor's fiction. Popular romance, it may be remembered, does not challenge "popular conviction" but rather reflects it; at the same time, it addresses issues which are timeless: the desire for an orderly and ideal world; the triumph of good over evil.

Popular romance, then, is by its very nature linked to the values of its time. As John Stevens comments,

> As in all our dealings with the Middle Ages—or, for that matter, ***with any period remote from our own*** [italics mine]—we find that the most important question to ask is ***not*** straightaway, 'What is this worth to me?' but 'What was this worth to ***them***?' Systems of thought, patterns of feeling, codes of behaviour, styles in literature and art—in a word, conventions—are not invented for their own sake and do not maintain their life on those terms. They come into being because they are needed. They are needed, primarily, for explanation; they are needed to order experience, to impose meaning on life. (29-30)

Ralph Connor's fiction, his romances, reflect the convictions of his society. Now it is true, of course, that Eastern Europeans, those "dirty little Galicians," (*The Foreigner*, 255) were pouring into western Canada by the thousands at the time he wrote. It was a time of social change in a part of the country which was unfamiliar not only to the immigrating Eastern Europeans, but unfamiliar as well to those of British descent who had also recently arrived in the Canadian West. In such times, when change produces uncertainty, people cling to what is familiar, to the social structures they have always known. Since British culture was traditionally dominant in eastern Canada, where Connor grew up, and since romance tends to reflect the values of the dominant class—in Connor's time, those Canadians of British descent—little value was attached to the ideals of the cultures from which these immigrants came.

It is important, too, to understand that Connor's fiction not only reflects the values of his English Canadian culture, but represents as well the sort of fiction which was popular at the time, as well as representing Connor's personal convictions, and the influence and experiences of his childhood. Writers like Bret Harte and Mark Twain had contributed to the public demand for local colour fiction. Gordon Roper notes that because of this popularity of local colour, "Canadian writers were encouraged to write out of their own experience of their own localities" (296). Both Herbert Ross Brown and James Hart note the popularity of religious fiction in the very late nineteenth century. *Ben Hur* (1880), *In His Steps* (1896), and *Quo Vadis?* (1896) all had phenomenal sales records. It is certainly not surprising that Connor's *Black Rock* (1898) and *The Sky Pilot* (1899), included by Hart among such popular fiction, appeared when they did. Not only do these books set forth the timeless battle between good and evil, but they address, as well, the very real problems created by alcohol at that time.

Moreover, Connor's autobiography, *Postscript to Adventure*, confirms his commitment to his religious faith and his opposition to the drinking of alcoholic beverages. As well, one recognizes in it the sources of many of the passages in his fiction, especially the Glengarry books. More important, one is struck by the fact that Connor could actually produce narrative passages in which sentimentality, if not entirely absent, was at least kept to a minimum. It seems probable that the sentimentality in Connor's fiction is in large part a reflection of the sentimentality which was so much a part of popular Victorian fiction. And the fiction, as Daniells and Watt note, reflects some values which are far older than Victorian times. Archetypal narrative patterns and archetypal characters reflect a tradition which extends even as far back as the prototypical medieval romance. All three of these threads—Connor's own experience; the qualities of sentimental fiction, especially Victorian fiction; and archetypal elements which have characterized romance since medieval times—should be borne in mind when assessing Connor's fiction.

A young Presbyterian missionary leaves his home in the East and travels to western Canada, where he battles apostasy and alcohol in his mission field. He gains the respect of the westerners, wins them to Christian sobriety, and finally marries his Eastern sweetheart. A young man grows up on the frontier of Canada West, very much influenced by the saintly wife of the devout Presbyterian minister. Grown to manhood, he works in Canadian West, improving the lot of the workers, and influences Sir John A. Macdonald to build a railroad all the way across Canada, after which he becomes engaged to a young woman very like the minister's wife he knew as a boy. A new Canadian, lately from Scotland, determines to find work and to succeed in this new country. He joins the North-West Mounted Police and distinguishes himself, finally marrying a young woman from Ontario. A young Russian immigrant leaves the Winnipeg slums to mature on the Saskatchewan prairies under the tutelage of a remittance man and a Presbyterian medical missionary. He prospers and marries a Scottish girl. Finally, a young Albertan clergyman leaves the West to confront a new frontier: the trenches of World War I. He gains the respect of his rude and irreverent fellow officers, distinguishes himself at the front, marries an English nurse, and is killed in battle. These are the basic plots of most of Ralph Connor's western books

These plots can be boiled down even further to one basic archetypal narrative pattern, the journey. The young protagonist leaves his home and his sweetheart and travels, usually west, to a strange terrain, where he encounters daily challenges. In his new work in the West he is aided or advised by an older person: a clergyman, clergyman's wife, or superintendent of missions. Ultimately, after numerous trials, he accomplishes his goal and, on the last page of the book, is reunited with his eastern or British sweetheart, whom he plans to marry. Much of Connor's western fiction can be summarized in this way. It is not difficult to perceive among these characters the archetypal hero, heroine, wise old man, and wise old woman. And within this journey narrative are several plot elements which appear throughout Connor's works: competition, romantic love, and tears. Although these elements come, to some extent, from Connor's experience and from contemporary popular taste, they are, as well, the legacies of the popular literature of earlier times, whose archetypal patterns Frye and others discuss.

Even more important to Connor's fiction, as Harrison has noted, is the way in which the protagonist is able to effect change in that area of the West where he works (*Unnamed Country*, 85-86). This is an important point, I think, for it is this vision of order which makes Canadian western fiction distinctive from other North American fiction of the West. The protagonist does not introduce to the West his own personal system or order, but that of the British Empire, which he represents; and his importance as an individual is subordinate to his membership in an orderly empire. So the transformation which historically typifies the characters of romance is, in Connor's romance, not only the transformation of the protagonist, but also the transformation of the characters who come under his influence in the West. The coarse mine workers of Black Rock become, under the tutelage and care of Mr. Craig, sober church attending men eager for the opportunity to rock Mrs. Mavor's baby. The Sky Pilot brings about similar developments among the residents of the foothills community where he works, as does Shock Macgregor in his western "mission field." And as a member of the North-West Mounted Police, Allan Cameron helps to subdue rebellious Indians and to extend the values of the Empire. British imperialism lost its appeal after World War I; to Connor's pre-war audience, however, the extension and reinforcement of Empire reflected in his fiction was a confirmation of what they believed in.

In *Unnamed Country*, Harrison comments on the "hazy identification of the human order of empire, the natural order, and the divine order" (79).

> This willingness to see the encompassing order as in some way sacred is a strong element in the Garden Myth of the early fiction, and relates it to the spirit of empire in the West which extends from young Henry Kelsey confidently making treaties between Cree and Blackfoot in 1690 to the uncanny devotion of the Mounted Police, to the attitudes of Connor's and McClung's heroes and heroines. (*Unnamed Country*, 79)

Especially for Connor's protagonists who are missionaries in the West, the primary motivation for the journey west is the propagation of the Christian gospel and, thus, the affirmation of the divine order. These young men feel called by God to undertake their missions to the West, and they go as servants of God, often sped on their way by their saintly mothers, the archetypal wise old women. It was not unusual for the medieval romance hero, as well, to ride forth as a servant. Often he is the servant of the lady whom he serves because he wishes to be worthy of her love and esteem. The knight of whom the Victorians were particularly fond was Galahad, whose strength derived from his purity (Houghton, 354). And there is a rather Galahad-like quality about Connor's heroes.

Competition, another archetypal narrative pattern, is evident in every one of Connor's books. In fact, competitive incidents are often the most interesting parts of these narratives. Such incidents were, of course, part of the adventure and local colour fiction which was popular at the time and have, in fact, always been important to popular adventure fiction, be it a medieval tournament or the Napoleonic wars. More important to Connor's fiction is the fact that he was reared in an environment in which competition was important. Of his school days in Glengarry, Ralph Connor writes,

> The Glengarry folk were a fighting people. The whole spirit of the school was permeated by the fighting motif. Every recitation was a contest. The winners went joyously to the top, the failures remained ignominiously at the foot. Medals of a quarter of a dollar for seniors, sixpences for juniors were provided. The pupil holding the head of the class for a day carried his medal home upon an inflated breast, and wore it next day till he lost his place. The pupil carrying the medal for a week could keep it. Also classes were frequently dismissed to their seats by a series of questions in mental arithmetic. Every pupil in the class was on his toes, the first one shouting the correct answer marched proudly to his seat. Good practice it was. As to the ethics and psychology let experts in modern pedagogy decide. (*Postscript to Adventure*, 17)

This competitive spirit extended throughout Connor's education at the University of Toronto, where he distinguished himself in boxing and on the Senior Rugby team (*Postscript to Adventure*, 41-43). When Connor relates how he approached Col. Sam Hughes and Solicitor General Arthur Meighen to request that the 43rd Cameron Highlanders, of whom Connor was the chaplain, be sent to the front to fight in World War I, his motivation for this request seems to be equal parts of patriotism and a determination not to miss a good fight (*Postscript to Adventure*, 201-214). And quite possibly the competition and fighting in Connor's fiction derive in part from the author's love of a good battle.

But there are other possible antecedents of the competition so characteristic of Connor's fiction. James Hart points out that while women at the turn of the century were reading "feminine novels, such books as *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* and *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, to show how happiness grows out of adversity" (209), fiction aimed at the male market became popular.

> Possessed of a similar Sunday School morality and employing almost as many cliches of pathos and sentiment as the women's books, the novels written by, and mostly for, men stressed the primitive virtues of vigor and courage and were filled with fighting, adventure, and sport. Early examples of novels more popular among men than women included Ralph Connor's *Black Rock* and *The Sky Pilot*, stories of the Christian influence working among rough western men ... . (214)

And five hundred years earlier Palamon and Arcite battled for the love of Emily; Sir Guy of Warwick slew infidels and dragons; and Arthur's knights competed in tournaments. Competition has long been a convention of romance.

The forms that competition takes in Connor's fiction represent a wide range of activities, competitive sports the most frequent. No book is without its competitive episodes. In Connor's first book, *Black Rock*, are found a horse race as well as the famous brawl between the Wets and the Drys (naturally the Drys win). Ranald and Mrs. Murray (*The Man from Glengarry*), mounted on horses, outrace a pack of menacing wolves. Later in the same book Ranald, in a battle of wits, shows his intellectual and tactical prowess in a game of poker (he does not, of course, keep his winnings). In other Connor books competitive incidents include football, hockey, boxing, and tennis matches. Land clearing, barn raising and turnip hoeing become competitive events. Perhaps the peak of competition in Connor's fiction is found in *The Sky Pilot,* when, at a funeral, the sleigh bearing the body races the sleighs carrying the mourners and the pall bearers. The passage is worth quoting at some length, not only for its action, but for its humour, a relative rarity in Connor's fiction:

> No one would be so narrow-minded as to object to the custom of the return procession falling into a series of horse-races of the wildest description, and ending up at Latour's in a general riot. But to race with the corpse was considered bad form. The "corpse-driver," as he was called, could hardly be blamed on this occasion. His acknowledged place was at the head of the procession, and it was a point of honor that that place should be retained. The fault clearly lay with the driver of the X L ranch sleigh, containing the mourners (an innovation, by the way), who felt aggrieved that Hi Kendal, driving the Ashley team with the pall-bearers (another innovation), should be given the place of honor next the corpse. ... But the X L driver could not accept this view, and at the first opportunity slipped past Hi and his pall-bearers and took the place next the sleigh that carried the coffin. It was possible that Hi might have borne with this affront and loss of position with even mind, but the jeering remarks of the mourners as they slid past triumphantly could not be endured, and the next moment the three teams were abreast in a race as for dear life. The corpse-driver, having the advantage of the beaten track, soon left the other two behind running neck and neck for second place, which was captured finally by Hi and maintained to the grave side, in spite of many attempts on the part of the X L's. (287-289)

Romantic love, though it figures in Connor's popular romances, is usually not a major plot element. But a number of his books end with an engagement or a marriage. The "last chapter marriage" is often a convention not only of Victorian popular fiction, but of all romance. Presumably the tensions of courtship provide more exciting reading than the stability of marriage. In fact, when Robert Bell, author of *The Ladder of Gold* (1850), places the marriage of heroine Margaret at the end of the second of three volumes, he feels compelled, at the beginning of the third volume, to comment to the reader:

> What could happen after that in which a novel-reader could be expected to feel any sympathy? The young lady was married, and made wretched for life, and there was an end of her. Romance is over, and vegetation begins when people marry. Hence it is that the established and legitimate law of novels is to reserve the matrimonial incidents for the cosummation of the story. You may do anything else you please with your characters during the course of the plot—hang or assassinate them, or let them run away with people's wives—but you must not marry them till the last page. The clergyman in a novel may be regarded as the undertaker of the story, and when he makes his appearance, the play is played out, and nothing more remains to be said or done but to bury the dead. (Vol. 3, Book 1, chap. 1, as quoted in Reed, 120-121)

All the world may love a lover; but when lovers become husbands and wives who turn their attention to the business of establishing a home, having children, and contributing to the life of the community, their relationship ceases to be private. The early stages of courtship are a private process which, in fiction, is likely to be characterized by idealism, intensity, and a modicum of suspense. Engagement and marriage, on the other hand, are likely to seem monotonous.

But what might be interpreted as the routine of marriage might also be envisioned as stability, the establishment of order.

> The peace [the Victorian home] promised was partly, to vary Ruskin's metaphor, that of a rock in the midst of a rushing stream. As most traditional beliefs and institutions on which stability depends were being questioned or transformed, the Victorian clung the harder to the oldest of all traditions and stressed its ordered hierarchy and daily ritual. Here at any rate was something firm to stand on. But this, I think, was largely unconscious. The conscious association of family life with security took another form. The home became the place where one *had* been at peace and childhood a blessed time when truth was certain and doubt with its divisive effects unknown. (Houghton, 344)

So the engagement or marriage which takes place in the final chapter—or even final paragraph—of Connor's fiction and of the Victorian popular romance fiction from which it was a direct descendant, might not derive so much from the romantic love interest of this fiction as from the idealistic realisation of order, through marriage, which often characterizes the endings of romance, whether medieval, Victorian, or early twentieth century.

Tears, which constitute an important plot element in Connor's fiction, are not so much an archetypal narrative pattern as they are a legacy from nineteenth century sentimental romance. Although a fair number of tears flowed in popular medieval romance, it is sentimental fiction, particularly in the nineteenth century, which brought weeping to an art. Characters—and readers—who could weep clearly demonstrated their benevolence. In popular sentimental literature pathos regularly degenerated to bathos, as characters wept their way through the narrative. This is the convention which Connor inherited from the generation of writers who preceded him; and although the modern audience finds these tearful scenes appallingly maudlin, the popular audience of Connor's time apparently appreciated an abundance of tears and sobs.

Connor's protagonists, invariably male, are denied some of the more normal emotional expressions. They seldom lose their tempers; instead, their anger is typically evident in their white faces, thin, tense mouths, and blazing eyes. There are two notable exceptions to the principle of restraint. In *The Foreigner*, Jack French teaches a Galician farmer and Kalman Kalmar how to fight with one's fists, rather than with a knife or a club, the weapon with which the farmer has attacked French. Says French, "Only a fool loses his temper, and only a cad uses a club or a knife when he fights" (216). The other incident occurs in *The Doctor*, when Dr. Barney Doyle, guest at a stag dinner for doctors, defends Iola Lane, whose honour has been questioned by the host of the dinner, Dr. Bulling. After beating Dr. Bulling and rendering him senseless on the lavatory floor, Doyle turns his fury on the other doctors present:

> "You're not fit to live! You're beasts of prey! No decent girl is safe from you!" His voice rose loud and thin and harsh. He was fast losing hold of himself. His ghastly face, bloody and horribly disfigured, made an appalling setting for his blazing eyes. Nearer and nearer the crowd he walked, gnashing and grinding his teeth till the foam fell from his lips. The wild fury of his Highland ancestors was turning him into a wild beast with a wild beast's lust of blood. (154)

Barney then procedes to wipe up the floor with the rest of the doctors. Apparently a gentleman may turn into a raging beast so long as he is defending the honour of a lady.

But it is all right for men—and for all the rest of Connor's characters, for that matter—to cry. In fact, his fiction must be the wettest of all Canadian literature. Ladies cry rather softly if they are of British descent, and with more volume if they are from eastern Europe. Margaret French, a suffering good woman who has chosen to remain a widow for most of her life, can usually be found soundlessly weeping whenever she is not otherwise occupied with good works, and sometimes even while she is so occupied. Men usually sob. Some "blow their noses like trumpets," miraculously escaping damage to their eardrums. Ultimately, most of the sympathetic characters shed tears.

The Man From Glengarry is built on a series of temptations, to which its protagonist, Ranald Macdonald, is subjected. He successfully resists the temptations to wreak vengeance on the man responsible for his uncle's death. He remains unsullied when exposed to the wicked city's allure. He will not use his skill at cards to take money from others. He declines the opportunity to cheat a naive business client. And, perhaps most important, he yearns for, but is denied, marriage with the flirtatious but shallow Maimie St. Clair, daughter of his first employer, when Maimie marries an equally shallow man. Through all this he is befriended by Kate, who loves him and who is a younger version of Mrs. Murray, the minister's wife. For most of the narrative Ranald pines for Maimie, until the final page of the book. There, by a coincidence acceptable only in romance, Ranald and Kate meet at a railroad station, after a long separation. Ranald 1) discovers that Kate is not engaged to anyone else 2) proposes to her 3) is accepted and 4) announces this to his friends who are present. The value for the reader, by this final and remarkably economical page, is not Ranald and Kate's romance, but the restoring of domestic order so that the book can end.

The plots of Connor's fictional works, then, fall within the conventions which have characterized romance as far back as popular medieval romance. In addition to plot, characterization reflects the romance tradition of archetypal characters. The angelic quality of the women in Connor's fiction is reminiscent of female characters in romance from Chaucer's fair Emily to Maria Cummins' longsuffering Gertrude. In his first book, ***Black Rock***, Mrs. Mavor, a bride, twenty-three years old, arrives with her husband, a remittance man, in a mining village in the Selkirk Mountains. Immediately labelled an angel by the men in the community, she is known for her unfailing sweet temper and her singing, her voice often heard over the tops of the trees of the community. (Either the town is exceedingly small and the trees very short, or Mrs. Mavor possesses phenomenal vocal cords.) But it is interesting to note that her voice comes from above, as one would expect of an angel's voice. On the day that her husband was killed, several years before the present action, the miners stood about, wondering how Mrs. Mavor should be informed. "And while we stood there, looking at one another in fear, there broke upon us the sound of a voice mounting high above the birch tops, singing—'Will ye no' come back again?'" (91) As Mrs. Mavor drew nearer, "the clear, sweet voice, ringing like a silver bell," one of the miners fell to his knees "sobbing out brokenly, 'O God! O God! have pity, have pity, have pity!'" The death of a loved one was, of course, dear to the heart of Victorian writers; and this incident gives Connor the opportunity to draw out the agony. For a page and a half, Mrs. Mavor's heavenly singing is interspersed with the groaning and agony of the men who must tell her of her husband's death.

Other female characters in Connor's fiction, virtuous beyond belief, reflect the romance tradition: Margaret Robertson (*The Doctor*) sweetly and patiently waits several years for Dick Doyle to come back to marry her, in the meantime caring for her widowed father and her younger brothers and sisters. Helen Fairbanks *(The Prospector)* waits for "Shock" Macgregor to return from his missionary work in Alberta. In the meantime, she keeps Shock's mother company and nurses her through a final illness. Her capacity for sacrifice extends even to foregoing marriage to Shock (on the last page) because of her mother's objections to the match.

Few mothers in Connor's fiction resemble Mrs. Fairbanks, however; most are the saintly and memorable. They are almost all Scottish or English, of course, and idealized versions of the Victorian woman. By day they keep spotless houses and concern themselves tirelessly with the welfare of their children. By night they wrestle with God in prayer, at first not wishing to give up their sons to God's work, but appear at breakfast wan and weakened, having relinquished those sons, usually to missionary work in Alberta. They seem, first of all, archetypal wise old women; moreover, they reflect the Victorian idealization of womanhood and, more specifically Connor's mother, Mary Robertson, a remarkable woman by any standards. She was such an impressive student at Mount Holyoke Ladies' Seminary, located in northeastern United States, that when the principal died, twenty-two year old Mary Robertson was offered the position. On the advice of her father, she declined the offer, and returned instead to Canada, where she married Donald Gordon (*Postscript to Adventure,* 7-11). The fictional character who most resembles her is Mrs. Murray, the minister's wife in *The Man from Glengarry.* That Mrs. Murray ever has time to sleep is astonishing. She tends to her house and family, teaches at least one Bible class each week, visits the sick, comforts the lonely, and never feels ill used.

The contrast between the literary conventions of late Victorian romance as seen in Connor's fiction and the realities of life outside fiction can be illuminated by Connor's autobiography. This is not to say that his recalling of conversations forty years after the fact is free of an element of fiction, but that the people in his autobiographical narrative are not developed through the same sort of conventions which operate in his fiction works. His description of his wife's behavior during her first pregnancy provides an interesting contrast to the behavior of Connor's fictional women:

> In the new situation I made new discoveries as to my wife. She laughed at my fears, she made nothing of her peril. I have often thought that God must provide a special endowment of courage for the event. My wife cannot sing. She can distinguish between "God Save the King" and "Old Hundred" but beyond that her musical knowledge is hazy. But in those days I could hear her going about her household tasks singing softly to herself. She amazed me. (*Postscript to Adventure,* 419)

Of all the women Connor writes about, only Helen Gordon, a non-fictional woman, has no musical talent. In fact, she may well be the only minister's wife in all of Ralph Connor's writing who cannot sing like an angel.

There are interesting levels of idealization of female characters in Connor's writing, beginning with Helen Gordon, the non-fictional woman who has no musical abilities, to the fictional virtuous young women, the saintly mothers, the angelic Mrs. Mavor whose voice is heard, and finally Mrs. Murray, who, at one point in the narrative, resembles a disembodied celestial voice. She and Ranald are riding through the bush shortly after the death of one of his friends.

> There was no response from Ranald, and Mrs. Murray, glancing at his gloomy face, knew that his heart was sore at the thought of the pain they were bearing with them. She hesitated a few moments, and then said, gently: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, and there shall be no more death." (*The Man from Glengarry*, 90)

Quoting directly from the Bible, she seems more like the voice of God than a human being. Clearly the fictional women are, in part, Victorian sentimental heroines. And they are, as well, spiritual cousins of the heroines of medieval romance. They are beautiful and virtuous. They ennoble the men who love them.

In *Unnamed Country* Dick Harrison notes that in the fiction of Connor, female characters have a civilizing function (86-87). Connor's females are usually wives or daughters of clergymen and are, without exception, originally from the East or from England or Scotland. Mrs. Mavor comes to Black Rock from Edinburgh with her husband. Not only does her husband give up drinking, but the rough and tumble men of the mining camp become gentle under her influence. At the Ashley Ranch (*The Sky Pilot*) the lifestyle reflects that of the English home of Lady Charlotte and the Hon. Fred Ashley. Barry Dunbar (*The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*) marries an English woman. Mandy Cameron (*Corporal Cameron*) is from Ontario. In *Patrol of the Dun Dance Trail*, Moira Cameron leaves Scotland to join her brother and sister-in-law in Alberta, where she marries a Scotsman who has long admired her. And Kalman

Kalmar, the eastern European protagonist of *The Foreigner*, eventually marries the daughter of a wealthy Scotsman. These women all encourage courtesy, gentleness, industry, and steadfastness. Harrison notes that in Connor's fiction "There is the implication that what is needed is a marriage of East and West with the civilized East softening and humanizing the virile but intemperate West" (*Unnamed Country*, 86).

But not all of Connor's fictional females are models of Christian deportment. Gwen, the young girl in *The Sky Pilot*, seems intended to portray the untamed, partly Wordsworthian child of nature. Accompanied by her two huge, undisciplined dogs, she rides her horse at a reckless pace, her red hair streaming behind her like a banner. She is quite willing to allow the dogs to kill the Sky Pilot's pony, and threatens to shoot the Sky Pilot as well with her "ugly-looking revolver" (116) when he prepares to shoot the dogs. Then, after the Sky Pilot assures her that he loves his pony very much, Gwen, "like one possessed" (117), falls on her disobedient dogs and commences to beat them mercilessly. Moments later she hugs the dogs passionately. Harrison suggests that Gwen may be associated with the darker side of human personality which is examined in *Wuthering Heights* and which Connor's Edenic approach could not adequately deal with, "a latent anarchic power, emanating from the land and taking the form of unregenerate natural man (or woman)" (*Unnamed Country*, 95). Whatever Connor's intent in creating Gwen, the result is a spoiled brat who is sorely in need of self control. Such a transformation, effected by the Sky Pilot after Gwen's crippling accident, produces a humbled girl who is able to accept her permanent paralysis with Christian sweetness and fortitude. The tamed Gwen is as unbelievable as the child of nature. But rendered a perpetual child by her paralysis, sexless and no longer threatening to the Victorian male, she is recognizable as a stereotypical virtuous female from Victorian sentimental fiction—if not angelic, then at least saintly. Harrison comments that Gwen

> is a complete child of nature, wild and fiery as her own streaming red hair, wilful and wicked in an outwardly asexual way. In some sense she is the spirit of Connor's West. She can be won over only after a riding accident confines her permanently to bed, when only the "Pilot's" Christianity can save her from despair. (95)

Harrison notes further that only after Gwen has safely been confined to her bed because of her injury does Connor provide a description of Gwen's Canyon, which represents the sort of beauty which can emerge from suffering. The narrator and the Sky Pilot ride their horses to this canyon:

> As we went down into the cool depths the spirit of the canyon came to meet us and took The Pilot in its grip. He rode in front, feasting his eyes on all the wonders in that storehouse of beauty. Trees of many kinds deepened the shadows of the canyon. Over us waved the big elms that grew up here and there out of the bottom, and around their feet clustered low cedars and hemlocks and balsams, while the sturdy, rugged oaks and delicate, trembling poplars clung to the rocky sides and clambered up and out to the canyon's sunny lips. Back of all, the great black rocks, decked with mossy bits and clinging things, glistened cool and moist between the parting trees. From many an oozy nook the dainty clematis and columbine shook out their bells, and, lower down, from beds of many-colored moss the late wind-flower and maiden-hair and tiny violet lifted up brave, sweet faces. And through the canyon the Little Swan sang its song to rocks and flowers and overhanging trees, a song of many tones, deep-booming where it took its first sheer plunge, gay-chattering where it threw itself down the ragged rocks, and soft-murmuring where it lingered about the roots of the loving, listening elms. (163-164)

Harrison goes on to point out that the sexual overtones of this canyon remain throughout the narrative, even though Gwen herself has been denied adult sexuality. He suggests that the sort of fiction which Connor was writing was simply not adequate to deal "with the more elemental and instinctual areas of experience" (97). The romances of such writers as Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, and Nathaniel Hawthorne do indeed deal with the darker, the passionate elements of human experience. But these writers were not popular romancers as Connor was. In popular romance, particularly the romances of Connor's era, lovers share a spiritual experience rather than a physical one; that is probably why, in popular romances from medieval times to Connor's, lovers are usually separated as soon as they recognize their attraction for each other, and not reunited until the final chapter, when they make plans to marry. What kissing, if any, does occur in a Connor romance is limited to the final paragraph of the book, with one exception, *The Doctor*.

Connor was not successful in creating female characters of easy virtue, the polar opposites of Mrs. Murray, probably because the men of his generation could not comfortably discuss female sexuality in any believable way. The one vamp in his western fiction is Iola, the schoolteacher from southern United States, in *The Doctor*. The Toast of Toronto, she inspires strong responses from all who meet her:

> Devoutly they worshipped at the shrine of that heavenlike and heaven-given instrument wherewith she could tickle their senses, rejoicing, during the pauses of their envies and hatreds, such among them as were female, and of their lusts and despairs such as were male, in her warm flesh tints and full flesh curves and the draperies withal wherewith, with consummate art, she revealed or enhanced the same. For Iola was possessed of a fatal, maddening beauty, and an alluring fascination of manner that wrought destruction among men and fury among women. (203)

The reader, stumbling through Connor's tortuous syntax, takes some time to respond to this lurid description of Iola. (Perhaps the complicated grammatical construction was meant to sanitize the subject; in any case, style obscures meaning, at least until the reader can figure out just what Connor was saying.) In one of two steamy scenes in which Iola wreaks destruction, Dr. Barney Doyle, madly in love with Iola, from whom he has parted in the other steamy scene, returns to find out whether she will accept the marriage proposal which he has sent in a letter. He walks into his brother Dick's room only to discover Dick and Iola passionately kissing, "conscious only of the passion throbbing in their hearts and pulsing through their bodies, oblivious to all about them" (209). Attempting to leave the room undetected, Barney trips over a chair. At this point the readers are in danger of falling out of their own chairs, helpless with laughter. The scene works wonderfully as farce, but that was probably not Connor's purpose in writing it. The sales for this book soared, perhaps partly because of what was, at that time, a titillating scene. In terms of Jungian archetypal figures, though, Iola probably functions as the anima, the character who represents the passion both of Dick and of Barney. Significantly, each of them ultimately rejects her.

If the quality which the angelic woman, the Wordsworthian child, and the vamp share is that they are flat, not individuals, this absence of individuality is typical of the male characters as well, many of them archetypal figures of hero or wise old man. The lack of individuality is reinforced by Connor's reference to some characters by their professions or relationships to others: "the Sky Pilot," "the Inspector," "the Superintendent," "the Sky Pilot's Chief," "the Old Timer," "the teacher," "the doctor," "the boy," "the father." Characters whose names we know lack individuality as well. Ranald Macdonald (*The Man from Glengarry*), Mr. Craig (*Black Rock*), Graeme (*Black Rock*), Arthur Wellington Moore (*The Sky Pilot*), Shock Macgregor (*The Prospector*), Larry Gwynne (*The Major*), Barry Dunbar (*The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*), Allan Cameron (*Corporal Cameron* and *The Patrol of the Sundance Trail*), Dick Doyle (*The Doctor*), and Jack Maitland (*To Him that Hath*), most of them protagonists, all prove their courage and moral strength as they face the challenges of leadership in an unfamiliar geographic area, usually the Canadian West. Most excelled in athletics in their youth, a reflection both of Connor's extensive participation in athletics and of the "muscular Christianity" he espoused. All are tall and handsome. Most have the guidance of an older person, perhaps mother, father, or superintendent of missions. And all, like the female angelic characters, are virtuous. It must be noted, however, that although Allan Cameron, Dick Doyle, and Barry Dunbar are eventually moral paragons, they do not start out in their narratives with clean slates: Dunbar was once "unfit"—that is, he drank alcoholic beverages, as did Allan Cameron, who was, as well, charged with, and eventually cleared of forgery. Dick Doyle, young seminary student, almost gave in to the temptation of lust. Each experiences a transformation.

One more characteristic that these young men share is their English and Scottish ancestry. In fact, almost all admirable characters in Connor's western fiction have such ancestry. The one exception to this is Kalman Kalmar, a Galician; but as soon as it appears that he is fully committed to becoming Canadian, Kalman is sent to live with a Saskatchewan farmer, Jack French, a remittance man from England, to learn how to be an English Canadian. By the conclusion of the book, Kalmar has become sufficiently like the characters of British ancestry that his Scottish fiancee, Marjorie, refers to him as her "Canadian foreigner." Throughout Connor's fiction there is evident a loyalty to a traditional class structure which is almost more British than anything found in England. It may derive in part from that impulse in romance fiction which idealizes the past, and it may also be a reflection of the pro-British bias of the expansionist movement. Although Connor's characters and narrators claim that western Canada is a classless society, these books are in fact characterized by a rather clear class structure.

Early in *The Major* (1917), Sybil Waring-Gaunt, a wealthy woman originally from England, is riding on horseback with her remittance-man brother, Jack Romayne, Oxford man, former world traveller. They are accompanied on this ride by Syvil's two Russian boarhounds. "'Forward' is the word here," Sybil tells her brother. "Here is an Empire in the making, another Britain, greater, finer, and without the hideous inequalities, injustices and foolish class distinctions of the old" (94).

But class distinctions do exist in abundance in Connor's fiction, based usually on racial or national origin. Although these distinctions, ultimately ethnocentric, are an anathema to modern sensitivities, they do represent a way in which Connor adapted the popular romance to his time and place. The aristocrats, though they are never the protagonists, are the English upper class. Next to the top on Connor's social ladder are the Scots, who usually include the protagonists. Standards of faith and behaviour are determined by these English and Scottish characters, both female and male, who have clearly been gently bred, while followers, rebels, toublemakers, and bad examples are Cockney (they do not qualify for positions of leadership, as do their more finely bred countrymen), Irish, French, eastern Europeans, Metis, and Indians. In fact, within the first few pages of his earliest book, *Black Rock,* Connor introduces Baptiste, a simpleminded French-Canadian, who defends a Glengarry Highlander from the "black-browed, villainous" Irishman, Keefe, shouting, "You keel him, I'll hit (eat) him up, me" (14-15). Connor's translation of "hit" and his ending of the Francophone characters' sentences with the objective personal pronoun are patronising. Connor introduces the antagonists of *The Man from Glengarry* as "Murphy's gang, a motley crew, mostly French Canadians and Irish, just out of the woods and ready for any devilment that promised excitement" (3). These men are

> shaggy of hair and beard, dressed out in red and blue and green jerseys, with knitted sashes about their waists, and red and blue and green *tuques* on their heads. Drunken rows were their delight, and fights so fierce that many a man came out battered and bruised to death or to life-long decrepitude. They were sitting on the benches that ran round the room or lounging against the bar singing, talking, blaspheming. (6)

Throughout Connor's fiction the French-Canadians are, at worst, treacherous, even barbaric, and at best, childlike and industrious. The Irish do not fare much better. Mrs. Perotte (*To Him that Hath*), married to a French-Canadian, is thriftless and stupid. Mrs. Fitzpatrick (*The Foreigner*), witness at a murder trial, amuses the onlookers with her garrulous testimony. Eastern Europeans, referred to as Galicians, rank lower on the social scale than do the French and the Irish. When Mrs. Fitzpatrick fails to convince Paulina, a slow witted Galician, that her sexual promiscuity is wrong, Connor comments, "It was the East meeting the West, the Slav facing the Anglo-Saxon. Between their points of view stretched generations of moral development. It was not a question of absolute moral character so much as a question of moral standards" (25). Indians, treated most extensively in *Corporal Cameron* and *The Patrol of the Sundance Trail*, are on the lowest level of this human scale in Connor's fiction, almost more a part of the local fauna than of the human inhabitants. They make gutteral noises; they grunt; their most common word is "Huh." They are alternately lazy and barbaric. In *The Gaspards of Pine Croft*, Connor attempts a pathetic reversal of this image of Indians, without success. The Indian woman Hugh Gaspard eventually marries (she has already borne his child while he was married to his first wife) was educated at a Roman Catholic mission school. Her education has rid her of uncivilized language and has instilled European values. Years later, after her death, her father, a chief, comes to claim his two mixed blood grandchildren. Although the two children love their

Indian grandfather, they choose to remain with their half-brother, whose ancestry is purely European. The chief departs without his only heir. The image is clearly that of a man whose race is destined for "a merciful extinction" (Harrison, *Unnamed Country*, 80).

In the ordered society which Connor envisions, then, Eastern (ultimately British) values of upper class manners and lifestyles, commitment to family and to the Dominion are carried to the West primarily by missionaries, doctors, and Mounties of British descent. Harrison points out that Arthur Wellington Moore, romance hero of *The Sky Pilot*, is delicately featured, albeit an accomplished athlete.

> He is clearly all that is missing from the West in a broadly spiritual sense, all things aesthetic, ethereal, and somehow feminine. His purpose is to set up a church, but also to civilize the West. He must contend with all that is crude, vulgar, and brutal in the raw settlements, and he must do it in a manly way. At first Moore is met with ridicule, but here he presents an interesting contrast with Owen Wister's eastern narrator. While Wister's "tenderfoot" can win only a conditional acceptance among westerners, and that by learning the ways of the West, Connor's "pilot" convinces the coarse ranch hands of the value of his eastern cultivation. He wins their respect by being a better baseball pitcher, and he outfaces a saloonful of scoffers in the same way the young Mountie quiets a roomful of gamblers. The contrast is characteristic of the Canadian vision of order. (Harrison, 85-86)

Harrison further points out that the pioneer farmers, "logically at the centre of the garden of the West" (89), call into question, in the fiction of Stead, the garden myth. In Connor's fiction, however, the struggling farmer is not in evidence. His ranchers are successful Britons of breeding and refinement: the Waring-Gaunts, the Ashleys, Jack French, the Gaspards. They bring their values to the West, establishing those values, in Connor's portrayal of the West, as the standards by which others are measured. Outside the Gaspard ranch bungalow are "gardens, riotous with flowers of all kinds and colours, some gathered from their native wilds near by and others transplanted from their native hants in Scottish glens and moors" (*Gaspards,* 11), while the inside of the bungalow reflects Old World comfort:

> Within the bungalow everything in furnishing and adornment suggested comfort and refinement. In the living room the walls of polished pine logs were hung with old tapestries, the rich red brown of the logs relieved by the gleam of old silver from the diamond-paned cupboards and bits of old china and Oriental jade, with a rare collection of ancient pewters disposed here and there. The note of easy comfort in the room was emphasised by the Persian and Assyrian rugs, with the skins of grizzly and cinnamon bear upon the floor, together with the solid, deep seated chairs and sofas upholstered in leather. Altogether, it was a wholly livable room, in which everything in the way of furnishing and adornment spoke of sound and educated taste. (11)

In this passage, in which the word *old* occurs three times, the pine forests of the new world have become "polished pine logs." Combined with the "Persion and Assyrian rugs" on the floor, clearly under the feet and the control of the home owner, are "skins of grizzly and cinnamon bear." And the word *cinnamon*, a commodity of the well-appointed kitchen, further civilizes the bears.

Place, as well as plot and characters, is also significant in the development of Connor's popular romances. Just as Sir Gawain rode through wastelands which were unfamiliar to him, almost all of Connor's protagonists prove themselves in a largely unsettled and unfamiliar Canadian West. If there are monsters in Gawain's wasteland, there are drunken brawlers and rebellious Natives in Connor's West, men and women whom the hero must win away from alcohol and to Christianity and allegiance to the Dominion. As a part of an ongoing romance tradition hundreds of years old, Connor's romances contribute to the development of the genre: his drunken "monsters" and illiterate "savages" undergo transformations in this unsettled place, as well as the heroes. If, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, home is King Arthur's civilized court, home, or the place from which Connor's heroes begin their journeys, is eastern Canada or the Old World. The New World, the archetypal wilderness, is not the same in Connor's romances as it is in prototypical romances; for Connor and for Stead, The Canadian West, the New World, is a place where some heroes establish their homes with—eastern wives.

Viewed from the egalitarian 1990's, Connor's social structure is outdated and ethnocentric, even, occasionally, racist. But in a time of social changes such a plan seemed eminently sensible not only to the powers in central Canada but to the British settlers in the West, who constituted the privileged minority, for it insured the passing on of familiar British standards in a changing society (L. G. Thomas, 66-69). It is also typical of any society undergoing change or development. Maintaining established social patterns, however outdated they may seem, is a way of assuring societal order. More typical of his society than Mrs. Waring-Gaunt, is Brown, the Presbyterian missionary in *The Foreigner*. Speaking of eastern European immigrants, he says, "These people here exist as an undigested foreign mass. They must be digested and absorbed into the body politic. They must be taught our ways of thinking and living, or it will be a mighty bad thing for us in Western Canada. Do you know, there are over twenty-five thousand of them already in this country?" (255). Brown's cannibalistic imagery is more probably evidence of Connor's stylistic difficulties than of an extreme cultural stance; but there is no doubt that eastern European immigrants are presented here as creatures inferior to their Anglo-Saxon betters. Clearly the ideals of Connor's fictional society are embodied in its controlling elite.

Archetypal patterns and Victorian sentimental traditions, then, inform plot, character, and place in Ralph Connor's western fiction. Young and untried British men carry Old World values to an uncultivated Canadian West. Having been the agents of the transformation of this Eden, the young heroes signal the establishment of order by marrying British or eastern Canadian women, whose continuing presence in the West ensures that this newly established order will flourish.

The above discussion of plots, characters, and motifs from the range of Connor's western romances illuminates this body of fiction as the popular romance it is. A closer reading of one of Connor's representative popular romances will not only continue to clarify what Connor was doing, but it will extend the discussion of romance. *The Prospector,* a formulaic romance about Shock Macgregor, an awkward young missionary sent to western Canada at the turn of the century, reflects, at a low mimetic level, many of the qualities of romance literature from the Middle Ages to the present in its plot and character development. The shape of this book is very like that of a medieval adventure romance, while the characters and incidents reflect the conventions of Victorian popular romance as well as some of the concerns contemporary to Connor's Canadian audience.

The Prospector

The Prospector is one of the more simply plotted of Connor's works. The plot structure is reminiscent of a medieval adventure romance in which a knight rides forth to accomplish a task. He encounters challenge after challenge and is successful in combatting evil opponents. Having accomplished what he set out to do, the hero returns home with a stronger sense of his own identity. Hamish "Shock" Macgregor, socially inept, ace rugby player for the University of Toronto team, is the idol of fellow student Helen Fairbanks. His mother, "the widow of a Sutherland Highlander whose picture in warlike regalia regards her daily from her cottage wall" (18), is devoted to her son and is one of his most exuberant fans. As Shock nears the end of his studies at Knox College, he volunteers for missionary service in the West. With great difficulty, Mrs. Macgregor and Helen Fairbanks—Shock has declared his undying love for her—are resigned to his leaving. Helen's mother, the socially elite Mrs. Fairbanks, strongly disapproves of Shock and of his plans to go west. After a highly emotional parting scene with his mother, Shock heads for Alberta. Within the first week of his arrival, Shock assists a badly injured man, saves the life of another, and intercepts a blow which would otherwise have killed a child. His efforts to minister to people "buried" in the remote parts of the mountains earn him the nickname "Prospector" among his friends. He combats, in incident after incident, drunkenness, swearing, swindles, prostitution, and despair. He continues to have enemies, though, both in the West and in the East. Returning temporarily to Toronto near the end of the book, Shock convinces his Presbyterian detractors to continue to support his work. Mrs. Fairbanks still adamantly opposes the marriage of Shock and Helen; since marriage is impossible, then, the young couple are determined to love each other, though parted.

Of all of the Connor heroes, Shock Macgregor receives the clearest "call" before beginning his journey to the West. Near the end of his studies at Knox College in Toronto, he is among the audience who hear the challenge to work in the West. The passage is striking not only because it presents the call which motivates Shock to journey west, but it introduces the unsettled place in which the young man will eventually prove himself. Moreover, the Presbyterian Superintendent's challenge to the young audience provides a focus on a particular time and place in Canada's development. The passage is striking because implicit in it is Connor's vision of

Canada's West as a place of promise, but a place in need of ordered development:

> The Superintendent had come from the West on his spring round-up. New settlements in anticipation of and following the new Railway, old settlements in British Columbia valleys formed twenty years ago and forgotten, ranches of the foot-hill country, the mining camps to the north and south of the new line—these were beginning to fire the imagination of older Canada. Fresh from the new and wonderful land lying west of the Great Lakes, with its spell upon him, its miseries, its infamies, its loneliness aching in his heart, but with the starlight of its promise burning in his eyes, he came to tell the men of the College of their duty, their privilege, their opportunity waiting in the West. For the most part his was a voice crying in the wilderness. Not yet had Canadians come to their faith in their Western Empire … . "For your Church, for your fellowmen, for Canada," rang out his last appeal, and the men passed out into the corridor toward the Entrance Hall, silent or conversing in low, earnest tones. There was none of the usual chaffing or larking. They had been thinking great thoughts and seeing great visions. (55-56)

The word *new* is used four times in this passage as a description of the West. And this concept of newness is reinforced by such words as *spring, not yet, prophetic, fresh, beginning, visions,* and *promise.* New is contrasted to old through the words *old* and *older.* News of the possibilities offered by the West is only "beginning to fire the imagination of older Canada" (52), and, according to the Superintendent's message, such churchmen as MacDougall and Robertson are the ones to report the West as a place of promise.

As in other Connor books, competition figures importantly in *The Prospector.* And, as is usual with Connor's fiction, the narration of the events goes far beyond the limits of credibility. Shock, for example, finds that he has ridden his cayuse into the middle of a makeshift racetrack on his first visit to the larger town near Loon Lake. The racing horses draw near to Shock, but he is unable to move his stubborn cayuse.

> A big black horse was plunging wildly not more than ten feet behind

> him. A fierce oath, a shower of dust and gravel in his face, a flash of legs and hoofs, and the big black was lifted clear over Shock and his cayuse, and was off again down the street between the lines of yelling men. (167-8)

That a horse and rider can leap over another horse and rider from a distance of only ten feet strains belief. But then romance is known for marvelous, even miraculous happenings. Equally unbelievable is the Toronto-McGill rugby match in which Shock distinguishes himself early in the book. This game, played for the Dominion championship in *The Prospector* (24-54), must be one of the bloodiest athletic contests in all of literature. A Toronto player breaks a leg; a McGill player sits on a Toronto man's stomach, digging his knees; all the players are bloodied, all the uniforms torn. Since Shock is a member of the Toronto team, the reader presumably cheering for that team, the most violent are the McGill team. They "hack," "scrag" (garotte), gouge, choke, and stomp on the Toronto players. The strength of the players, moreover, is phenomenal as they lift and toss each other about like rag dolls. And if the players are unruly, the fans on both sides are equally unruly. The crowd surges onto the field three times mid-play, shouting encouragement and direction to the teams until "the police push in, threatening with their batons" (41). Toward the end of the overtime play "the crowds are howling like maniacs" (51).

Connor's thirty-page play-by-play treatment of this game probably appealed to the athletes in his audience. And although his use of present tense to describe competitive incidents does give a sense of immediacy, its repeated use eventually becomes an annoying cliche. Nonetheless, this is a game which must have passed into legend. One passage will illustrate:

> First Dorion springs at him, but The Don's open hand at the end of a rigid arm catches him full in the neck, and Dorion goes down like a

> stick.
>
> Big McDonnell bears swiftly down upon him and leaps high at him, but The Don lowers his shoulder, catches McDonnell below the wind and slides him over his back; but before he can get up speed again little Carroll is clutching at his hips, and Mooney, the McGill full back, comes rushing at him. Swinging round, The Don shakes Carroll partly off, and with that fierce downward cut of his arm which is his special trick, sends the little quarter flying, and just as Mooney tackles, passes the ball over his shoulder to Shock, who is immediately pounced upon by half a dozen McGill men, but who, ere he is held, passes to Campbell, who in turn works forward a few yards, and again on being tackled, passes to The Don. It is a magnificent bit of play. (45-6)

Matthew Slobod, a member of the Edmonton Rugby Union, kindly agreed to read Connor's fictional account of the Toronto-McGill game in *The Prospector.* He commented that rugby football, the forerunner of today's sport of football, was, at the turn of the century, sometimes called "rugby football," and at other times "rugby" or "football." Connor uses the latter two terms interchangeably. As for the roughness of the game which Connor narrates, Slobod remarked that the garroting and the stomping on faces in Connor's account are not unknown in present-day rugby games. It is clearly not a sport for the faint hearted. In *Postscript to Adventure* Connor comments that his brother Gilbert "was acknowledged to be the finest halfback of his time in Canada. It was a glorious thing to see him go down through the whole field, swift as a hare, to make his touch" (38). Quite possibly the outstanding halfback in this fictional football game is a tribute to Gilbert Gordon.

The commitment of Shock to Helen, which is economically accomplished in the final twelve lines of the book, is important not just because the female readers demanded a love interest in popular fiction, but as well because it affirms the order which has been established through Shock's missionary work.

> "I have told her," said Mrs. Fairbanks between her sobs, "I will

> never consent to her marriage with you."
>
> Shock's heart gave a leap.
>
> "And what did she say?" he inquired in an unsteady voice.
>
> "She said you would not marry her without my consent."
>
> "And that is true," said Shock.
>
> "And what, then, will you do?" inquired Mrs. Fairbanks.
>
> Shock threw up his head, with joy illumining his face.
>
> "I—we—" changing the pronoun with a sudden ecstasy of rapture, "we can wait."
>
> "And how long, pray?" inquired Mrs. Fairbanks, scornfully.
>
> "How long?" He paused as if pondering the question. "Forever!" (401)

By page 401 the reader has no doubt that Mrs. Fairbanks is a thoroughly shallow and snobbish woman. Were Shock and Helen to marry, despite her objections to Shock's middle class birth and breeding, the reader might be quite sympathetic. But such a marriage would actually be disorderly because it could not be accomplished with the parental blessing so important to Connor's contemporary readers, and it would thus undercut the order which had been established. So Shock's declaration that he will wait "forever" not only conforms to the social demands of his time, but demonstrates a nobility of spirit and suggests a commitment whose permanence may be even superior to marriage, for it is a commitment which is entirely spiritual.

Ralph Connor's grandson, Charles Gordon, has written,

> The reader of the modern novel—in which the guy with will-power is someone who waits until he is formally introduced to the girl before leaping into the sack with her—will find it exceedingly difficult to understand how in *Black Rock* the young minister's decision to go away without the widow he loves is, somehow, a triumph. I've reread it several times and I still don't really understand it. (14)

It is perhaps difficult for the modern reader to accept such an ending to a popular romance; but the idealizing of love appealed to a medieval and a Victorian audience. In fact, the denial of a physical bond increased the intensity of the relationship.

If romantic love is typical of romance in any era, and competition typical of adventure romance from medieval times to the present, two narrative elements in *The Prospector* are particularly characteristic of Victorian sentimental fiction: swindles and deathbeds. John Reed, in *Victorian Conventions*, suggests that the swindle may have been popular with Victorian sentimental writers because it reflected the commercial focus of Victorian society (172-186). And that may be, in part, Connor's purpose in including the attempt by Crawley, a suave, educated man, to steal from Marian Mowbray the claim to the gold mine her father, the Old Prospector, located shortly before his death. Another possibility is that since Crawley, with his smooth manners and cultured tongue, might represent the dangers posed by those who come from Eastern cities. Now it is true that in Connor's fiction the values of the East are often successfully introduced to the West by the hero who comes originally from the East. But, at the same time, the Edenic qualities of Connor's West invite the redemption and transformation of those who have become infected with the dross of eastern culture; so Crawley's eventual fear of punishment when his crime is found out may be the prelude to remorse and forgiveness and, in a larger sense, a part of the moral shape of the book.

The deathbed is another literary convention of sentimental fiction which exists in abundance in *The Prospector*. Elizabeth Longford notes that

> Frank interest in death-bed scenes was quite normal. Partly because Victorians cared passionately about religion, the moment of passing from this world to the next was not one to be hushed up. Only paupers died in hospital so opportunities for study were plentiful. (310)

And Dunbar comments that "Mourning the dead is an instinct as old as man, but in no era had it become such an iron-bound convention as in the Victorian age" (60). Three deaths and one near-death occur in *The Prospector*. Patsy Carroll nearly dies from an accidental blow. And death actually comes to the Old Prospector, Mrs. Macgregor, and Betty Fairbanks, sister of Helen Fairbanks. Patsy's head injury provides the opportunity for drunken Dr. Burton to sober up and to demonstrate his skills as the former "President of the Faculty of Guy's, London, a man with a reputation second to none in the Metropolis" (230). As well, Patsy's surviving the incredibly delicate operation performed in his parents' rude home—surely one of the cliches of frontier fiction—marks the beginning of his father's transformation from a drunken, blaspheming brawler who loathes Shock, to the reformed man and intense supporter of Shock he eventually becomes.

Then there are the three deaths in the book. The death of the Old Prospector is drawn out for more than ten pages. It includes the doctor's verdict, the old man's revealing to Shock the location of the gold mine he has long sought, his request to Shock to see that his daughter inherits the mine, the daughter's singing his favourite hymn to her father, who, dying, has been carried outdoors so that he can see the stars and the trees, and sobbing before and after the old man's death. This death does serve to advance the plot, since villain Crawley manages to be within hearing distance when the Old Prospector reveals the whereabouts of the mine. But it seems primarily a sentimental passage, affording the readers the opportunity to have a good cry.

The second death, that of Mrs. Macgregor, takes place at a distance, news of her illness and subsequent death reaching Shock by telegraph. We are given few details about her death itself, only that she died peacefully and, before she died, asked that Shock be given this message: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. Stay at your post, lad, till He calls" (307). If the news of this death is characterized by an absence of tears, it must be remembered that the original premonition of Mrs. Macgregor's death comes earlier in the book during the emotional farewell between mother and son as Shock prepares to leave for the West:

> His mother turned to him and took his head to her bosom in a close embrace, but no words came from her.
>
> "But, mother, don't be grieving like this," sobbed Shock, "or how can I leave you at all."
>
> "Laddie, laddie, why did you come in to me? I had minded to give you up without tears, and this iss my hour of weakness. There now, let your head lie there. Whist! lad, och-hone. It iss twenty-four years since first you lay there, lad, and though grief hass come to me many's the day, yet never through you, never once through you, and you will be remembering that, lad. It will comfort you after—after—after I'm gone."
>
> "Gone, mother!" cried Shock in surprise.
>
> "Yess, for this iss the word given to me this night, that you will see my face no more."
>
> "Oh, mother! mother! don't say that word, for I cannot bear it," and poor Shock buried his face in the pillow, while his great frame shook with sobs.
>
> "Whist now, laddie! There now. It iss the Lord." (88-89)

To send a son off to a distant and unfamiliar territory with the announcement that his mother will die while he is away hardly seems fair of author Connor. But perhaps Connor's readers loved scenes like this which invited their tears. Informing this scene, moreover, and the scene later in the book in which Shock is notified of his mother's death is devotion to duty, a quality very important to Victorians. It is also a form of courage, surely a virtue in the romance hero

A letter bearing news of the death of Betty Fairbanks immediately follows the death of Mrs. Macgregor. Although Betty's death—it goes on for eleven pages—might seem gratuitous, included to wring yet more tears from the reader, the narrative of her death functions as more than a catalyst for tears: it develops Mrs. Fairbanks as a destructive, elitist snob. She opposes Betty's friendship with Donald Balfour ("The Don"), whom she considers too middle class for her daughter. With the help of Lloyd, a university chum of The Don and of Shock, and now the minister of a posh Toronto church, Mrs. Fairbanks manages to dredge up evidence that The Don, years earlier, was once a libertine. Despite The Don's plea that this was years ago and that he has reformed, Betty sends him away, and her mother triumphs. Betty falls into a decline, from which she never recovers. But before she breathes her last, she calls for The Don, forgives him, and attempts a reconciliation between The Don and her mother (it lasts until Betty is dead, at which point her mother again refuses to speak to The Don). The extremes of character and plot in "Betty's Last Words," the chapter in which Betty dies, can best be understood as melodrama. Betty's sweet smile and childlike innocence, The Don's anguish, Lloyd's betrayal, and, most of all, Mrs. Fairbanks' rigid selfishness exist without any believable interaction of the characters. To a modern audience such writing may be boring or amusing, perhaps even comic; but the phenomenal sales of Connor's books indicate that his contemporary audience loved it.

The Prospector has a goodly share of the characters who are stock figures in Connor's fiction and in Victorian sentimental fiction generally: a young missionary; a saintly mother; a virtuous sweetheart; a drunken doctor; a reformed prostitute; the child who almost dies; and a worldly wise, oily villain. There are also characters linked with western Canada: the Mountie and the remittance man. Most of the characters are black or white, good or bad.

In a broader sense, though, archetypal figures and their moral opposites are evident in the characters of *The Prospector*, at the low mimetic level of popular romance. Shock's saintly mother, a wise old woman, is the moral opposite of Helen

Fairbanks' mother, who works hard to destroy the happiness of both her daughters. Equally destructive is Nancy, who runs the brothel not far from Loon Lake and who, when Shock has gone to the brothel to retrieve a friend from a poker game, shrieks "Kill him! kill him!" to the men who attack Shock (339). Like Mrs. Fairbanks, she functions as a kind of wicked witch. Nancy's moral opposite is Nell, the reformed prostitute turned nurse. (In accordance with the standards of Connor's audience in 1904, Nell remains single after her transformation because her sexual history disqualifies her from marriage.) Lloyd, Shock's friend at Knox College, ultimately turns traitor, working in collusion with Mrs. Fairbanks. McFarren, Shock's Presbyterian contact in the town near Loon Lake, turns out to be adamantly opposed to Shock's establishing a church in this town, for McFarren likes to drink, and has strayed far from the church. He, too, functions as a kind of traitor. Frye places faithful companions as the moral opposites of the traitors. In *The Prospector*, the Kid and Ike, a remittance man, are Shock's companions and protectors, once Shock asks them to join him for evening prayers. Crawley, the villain, might be said to be the moral opposite of Shock, the hero; because he does not seem to be motivated by any inner conviction, though, he functions at the level of melodrama.

Shock Macgregor, of all Connor's protagonists, probably comes the closest to being an archetypal romance hero. At the beginning of the book Shock is easily one of the best athletes at the University of Toronto, proving his strength and manliness in the Toronto-McGill rugby match. That he is a man of deep feeling is demonstrated in his love for his mother and for Helen Fairbanks. But Shock is an awkward, shy man, unpolished, rarely sure of himself in social situations. After listening to the Presbyterian Superintendent of Missions speak of the need for missionaries in the West, Shock's friends discuss who of their group might be an appropriate candidate:

> "What's the matter with Shock?" suggested someone; "he's a good strong man." There was a general laugh.
>
> "You're the man, Shock. You would clear out those saloons."
>
> "Can you ride a bronco, Shock?"
>
> At the good-natured chaff Shock blushed a deeper red than usual. No one expected much of poor Shock. Indeed, most of his classmates wondered if he would ever "get a place," and none more than Shock himself. (59-60)

By the end of the book Shock, transformed by challenges he has successfully met in the West, is still a quiet man; but he has, for the first time, the ability to act assertively. He can speak to a gathering of clergy and lay people without undue stress; finally, he is able to discuss with Mrs. Fairbanks his love for her daughter Helen without being intimidated by the mother's hauteur.

Not only is order established in the course of Shock's metaphoric journey, but the unproven hero, transformed, proves himself equal to his task, coming to understand himself in the process. Shock helps a drunken doctor to stay sober. He turns his sworn enemy into a friend. He persuades members of his western community to cooperate in the "erection of a building that would serve for church, manse, club-house, schoolroom, and library, and would thus become a spot around which the life of the community might gather in a clean and wholesome atmosphere" (292). He can return to Toronto knowing that he accomplished what he set out to do.

Ultimately, no character is neutral; all are good or bad. This moral polarization is carried over into their attitudes toward Shock. The good ones are for him, and the bad ones are against him. Naturally, his mother and his sweetheart love him from the beginning. And the Superintendent and the Convenor are supportive. Those characters, however, who undergo moral change also develop or change in their attitudes toward Shock. Ike, The Kid, Carroll, and Dr. Burton become Shock's friends, even protectors when they reform. We do not find out what happens to Crawley after the first appearance of his remorse for what he has done. Mrs. Fairbanks' pride and selfishness, unfortunately, are still her motivation at the end of the book.

The setting, narrative patterns, and archetypal characters of *The Prospector,* then, provide a clear model of popular romance. This book does not offer the complexity that *The Scarlet Letter* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* do; but as Frye suggests in *Anatomy of Criticism,*

> we shall find that superficial literature ... is of great value to archetypal criticism simply because it is conventional. If throughout this book I refer to popular fiction as frequently as to the greatest novels and epics, it is for the same reason that a musician attempting to explain the rudimentary facts about counterpoint would be more likely, at least at first, to illustrate from "Three Blind Mice" than from a complex Bach fugue. (104)

By the time Ralph Connor began publishing his popular fiction works in 1898 the expansionist movement with its optimistic rhetoric which envisioned western Canada as the land of promise, if not the promised land, had died. By the time his first book appeared, the increasingly discontented farmers were protesting such issues as federal administration of public lands, tariff rates which benefited eastern Canadians but hurt the western farmer, and CPR freight rates which were unfair to westerners. By the turn of the century western farmers had organized into cooperative associations in order to strengthen their protests and to work for federal policies which would benefit them. Rapid changes had taken place on the prairies between 1870 and 1900. The Edenic garden promised by the expansionists had vanished.

> The very fact that such warm debates had developed by the turn of the century suggests how great was the change in the region during just one generation. In the 1870's, westerners worried about the buffalo; by

> 1900, they worried about the cost of transporting wheat, of importing farm implements, and of purchasing nearby quarter-sections. A new age had begun. (Friesen, 194)

Connor's fiction does not reflect this agricultural discontent. *The Foreigner*, *Corporal Cameron*, and *Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail* are all set in the 1880's, early in this time of change and, for Connor and his audience, the past. But the time of publication of the most popular of Connor's books was a time of disturbing changes in western Canada, in both rural and urban areas. Census reports for 1901 and 1911 indicate an enormous growth of population in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton. But the Winnipeg Connor depicts in *The Foreigner* is the Winnipeg of the early 1880's, a time when eastern European immigrants lived at a comforting distance from the more respectable Anglo-Saxon citizens. In a recent article Andrew Nikiforuk, alluding to the Edenic vision of the expansionist period, has commented on the beginnings of this immigrant neighbourhood:

> The North End dates to the late 1800's, when wheat made Winnipeg the Gateway to the West and the city's sprawling new Canadian Pacific Railway yards demanded immigrant labour. On streets named after Scottish settlers, thousands of European refugees from Old World wars, persecution and hunger planted New World synagogues, labour temples and gardens. Those who spoke English called it CPR Town or New Jerusalem. The city directory simply listed its residents as "foreigners." (72)

Connor, the social gospeller, worked to improve the deplorable living and working conditions of the North Enders of his own time. As Ralph Connor, author of popular romance, he wrote of an earlier time, when problems as well as their solutions seemed much simpler, at least to the Imperialist consciousness. "They must be taught our ways of living and thinking," says missionary Brown in *The Foreigner* (255). The "Galicians" who prosper do indeed learn "our ways." And Kalman Kalmar, taught by an Englishman to behave like a British gentleman, earns the ultimate hero's reward in Connor's fiction: a wealthy British wife.

Connor's western fiction, then, is popular romance. It is naive. It is quaint and outdated, filled with incidents and characters out of tune not only with the present day, but even with the time of its publication. But it is the expression of the idealism of an earlier time. The commercial success of these books suggests that they confirmed the ideals of the audience toward whom they were directed, revealing much about that audience. The development of realism in prairie fiction did not signal the death of popular romance fiction in Canada. Current sales records for Harlequin Romances prove that romance is alive today and very healthy. Popular romances published nearly a century after Connor's books were so eagerly received, like romances of any era, continue to flourish, probably because of the perpetual human wish for an exciting life with a happy ending.

Chapter Three

From Romance to Realism: The Fiction of Robert Stead

In a 1936 newspaper interview, Robert J. C. Stead, then 56, recounted how he had met Charles Gordon, who was later to become well known as "Ralph Connor":

> You see, our family was Presbyterian. And Ralph Connor, then a student, known as "Charlie Gordon," was sent to our "field"—and he was sent to board with us. Well, one evening I heard what seemed, to my very youthful mind, the most ravishing strains of music I had ever heard. I rushed toward its source—and, to my amazement and delight, I found the student-missionary performing on a jews-harp. Thus began our friendship; and I gladly acknowledge my debt to the cultured and vari-gifted Ralph Connor as the man who first introduced me, by many a subsequent colloquy, to the wonders of the writer's art. (*Toronto Star,* April 6, 1936, 3, Stead Papers, Vol 1, File 1-12)[1]

The cordial relationship, begun when "Charlie" Gordon enchanted Stead with his music, seems to have lasted throughout their lives; years later, in a letter to Stead, who was then writing a biography of Ralph Connor for the Ryerson Press[2], Gordon wrote:

> Now, if you would care I would be glad to look over whatever sketch you can make out of this material [biographical sketches from Gordon's publishers] and add such touches and notes as might give a little more diversity or perhaps lend interest to the material sent you. For instance, I could tell how in our first Manitoba Mission Field it was my great pleasure to live at the home of the father of the poet and author, Robert J. C. Stead, and how I used to carry around upon my shoulder a chubby two year old boy with curly flaxen hair between whom and myself were then and there established life long and enduring bonds of affection. (March 7, 1924, Stead Papers, Vol 1, File 1-15)

It would be frivolous to suggest that Connor's phrase, "life long and enduring bonds of affection," constitutes the basis for juxtaposing studies of their fiction; it does not, of course. In fact, apart from the above comment by Gordon and one of his calling cards inscribed "To Bobby with love," found among the Stead papers, there is, as far as is now known, no evidence among the Gordon or Stead papers to suggest a sustained friendship between the two men. But Stead's reference to Ralph Connor in the *Star* interview clearly suggests Stead's admiration of Connor's fiction.

The laudatory biography of Ralph Connor which Stead prepared for the Ryerson Press (only a fragment is included in the Stead papers) further reflects this admiration of Connor and his fiction. The *Toronto Star* article quoted above was originally in this biography, as was that portion of Connor's March 7, 1924 letter which refers to Connor's friendship with the "chubby two year old boy with the curly flaxen hair." Stead kept meticulous records of the blocks of time he spent in writing it (a total of ninety-three and one-half hours). The portion of the biography which survives in the Stead papers, however, contains little of Stead's comment, for approximately eighty per cent of this fragment consists of quotations from Connor's work. In fact, Stead may have felt intimidated by this biographical project; he twice refers to himself apologetically: "Such an analysis [a thorough analysis of all Connor's work] will, no doubt, be done in time, and will, let us hope, fall to the pen of a critic more competent than the present writer" (113). A few pages later, Stead again downplays his abilities, for he writes, "Perhaps I cannot better close this all too inadequate appreciation than by quoting the second paragraph of C. W. Gordon's preface to 'Black Rock'" (116).

Not only did Stead admire Connor, but he was influenced by Connor's fiction as well. Two critical comments note this: Eric Thompson comments that "Charles Gordon (pseud. Ralph Connor), probably more than anyone else, influenced Stead the novelist ..." (221). J. D. Logan and Donald French wrote in 1924 that apart from the fiction of Agnes Laut and R. G. Macbeth, "The rest of Canadian fiction can be divided into two general classes, typified by the authors who have won the greatest success in practising them. There is the class of Ralph Connor and the class of L. M. Montgomery" (128). They label those fiction writers who emulate Connor the "Connor-ites" and comment that Robert Stead is "finding [his] way out of 'Connor-ite' ranks" (133). Their point is that Stead is moving away from the formulaic romance with its "handsome youths absorbed in their chivalrous concerns," and toward realism (128).

The early years of Stead's fiction writing reveal a number of parallels with Connor's fiction. Just as several of Connor's books were printed in serial form in *The Westminster*, Stead's second fictional work, *The Homesteaders*, also appeared serialized in *The Westminster* in 1916. Although he eventually moved toward literary realism, Stead's early fiction works are the sort of popular romances which characterized not only all of Connor's fiction, but such formulaic fiction as was produced by western Canadian writers Nellie McClung and Arthur Stringer as well. Popular romances sold well, Stead's romances among them. Connor continued to produce the didactic and naive romances in which the clergyman, the school teacher, and the Mountie were the chief characters. Stead, on the other hand, gradually moved away from writing romance; his two final books, *Grain* and *Dry Water*, are in the mode of literary realism. In fact, he was, as Dick Harrison comments in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, "the only writer to span the development of prairie fiction from the popular genre of romances of pioneering to realistic novels scrutinizing the values of prairie society" (771). A reason for Stead's movement away from romance and toward realism is provided by Harrison in *Unnamed Country*, when he comments that Connor's three main characters are all representatives of and keepers of order. Unlike Connor, Harrison comments, Stead increasingly focuses on the pioneers, the farmers themselves. "They are at the centre, but do not, like the Mountie, the minister, and the teacher, *represent* the intangible order of the garden" (89). Then, too, as Stead becomes decreasingly didactic, his fiction becomes less romantic and more realistic. His two final books, *Grain* and *Dry Water*, are realistic novels, but, as Harrison notes, Stead never abandons romance; instead, elements of romance in his final work are ironically opposed to realism (*Unnamed Country*, 102-103).

Just as Connor's fictional missionaries to the Canadian West may reflect some of his own experience, a remarkable number of Stead's characters are young men who, like their author, grew up on farms and whose study of literature ended with high school graduation. That they are able to quote poetry liberally is evidence of the hours they spent in self-education. These intelligent romance protagonists, who have little formal education, may reflect a defensiveness in their author. Stead wrote in his spare time, at the end of the day, for he worked at other jobs full-time. For a number of years he lived in Calgary, at first in newspaper work, and then in the area of publicity, first in Calgary for the CPR, and then, finally, in Ottawa, where he worked for the Department of Immigration and Colonization and then for the Department of Mines and Resources, until his retirement. Stead's first publications were five small volumes of poetry. Throughout his career he also published single poems, short stories, and short essays. It is chiefly for his nine long fictional works that Stead is known, though, the first eight published during his lifetime, and the final novel, *Dry Water*, published in 1983, twenty-four years after his death in 1959.

His first romance, *The Bail Jumper* (1914), includes some passages about homesteading, but its greater importance is the introduction of Plainville, Manitoba, the town which figures in several of Stead's books. *The Homesteaders* (1916) was Stead's most popular book, going through five editions. Within the framework of romance, Stead introduces in *The Homesteaders* the theme of the tragedy of pioneering; over a twenty-five year period an idealistic homesteader who is committed to his growing family, develops his land into a profitable farm. Twenty-five years later this farmer's commitment has shifted to property and to money; consequently he alienates the affections of the very family for whose benefit his work was originally intended. *The Cow Puncher* (1918), set in and around Calgary, examines the growing materialism and the indifferent business ethics during the real estate boom which preceded World War I. Published during this war, the book seems more a recruitment tool than anything else. Everything the protagonist does is done well, and ethically; his enlistment in the war and his subsequent death, then, establish him as a quiet Canadian hero. Most critics disapprove of the marriage of romance and social doctrine in *Dennison Grant* (1920). That is not the problem, since romance and didacticism are natural bedfellows. The mistake Stead makes in this book is to set up a formulaic romance and then abandon that form for social doctrine. Had he blended the two forms, sales might have been better. Stead rewrote *Dennison Grant,* naming the new book *Zen of the Y.D.* In this rewritten form, which was syndicated for serial publication in newspapers, he unnecessarily removed much of the the social doctrine, but blended what was left of such passages with the popular romance form. *Neighbours* (1922) is an idyllic narrative of homesteading and is the book in which Stead most extensively examines the multicultural nature of homesteading communities. *The Smoking Flax* (1924) shows clearly Stead's movement toward realism, especially in the bleak life of the farm wife. And in *Grain* (1926), whose plot and characters partially overlap *The Smoking Flax*, he turns from romance to the novel to develop realistically the character Gander Stake. *Dry Water* (1983) is also a realistic novel whose plot somewhat resembles that of *The Homesteaders*. Like that book, *Dry Water* explores the theme of materialism, but with greater artistic maturity.

Critical comment on Stead's fiction (no critic in at least the last forty years has examined to any extent Stead's poetry) varies, including generic and thematic issues. Edward McCourt does not devote much space in *The Canadian West in Fiction* to Stead. McCourt dismisses the first three books (he calls them "novels") as fiction of no account. He is particularly annoyed with the mixture of love and social doctrine in *Dennison Grant*. The two, claims McCourt, do not mix. But since love and religious doctrine worked very well in Connor's popular fiction, it seems possible that love and social doctrine can be successfully combined in Stead's. McCourt then discusses *Grain*, which he considers Stead's best book because Gander is not a romance hero, but a fallible man; and all other characters are developed within Stead's focus on Gander. McCourt's comment that the ending of *Grain* is romantic seems to be an inaccurate assessment; Gander's move to the city and to Gerry Chansley is more likely a possible way out of an unbearable situation.

McCourt does make one positive comment about Stead's fiction in general: he sees Stead as having escaped the temptation to write in the tradition of the American Wild West, presenting instead a Canadian society in his fiction. Laurence Ricou, author of *Vertical Man/Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction*, takes issue with McCourt on this point. He says that in *The Homesteaders* Stead abandons a narrative of the Canadian West to write a story of murder and intrigue. It is true that the tone of the second section of *The Homesteaders*, set twenty-five years after John and Mary Harris begin homesteading, contrasts with the earlier part of the book: its narrative of robbery and murder is melodrama. But if one envisions it in a larger context as a narrative about materialism, set in the Canadian West, then Stead does not abandon his original subject, but does change the mode mid-book. Interestingly enough, two readers at Doran's, an American press which considered publishing *Grain*, suggested that Stead would increase readership in the United States if his books had American settings and more action. To this suggestion Stead's American literary agent, Z. C. Brandt, responded in a March 4, 1925 letter:

> I honestly cannot agree with the idea of your changing into a thrilling western tale. I personally don't like western stories and I do like your books. You would lose that audience and I imagine the gain you made the other way would not be sufficiently worth while. At least, we have never found that not being true to your own ideals was worth it in the long run for an author. (Stead Papers, Volume 1, File 1-1)

Ricou, recognizing Stead's eventual blending of romance and realism, goes on to say that *Dennison Grant* and *Grain* indicate "that the social novel was supplanting the romance as the dominant fictional mode" (20) and that Stead's realism is a partial realism, with a lingering sentimentalism. "Consistently, Stead emphasizes the regality of prairie man in a land appointed to his gratification and aggrandizement" (21). He comments that Stead's early novels are sentimental, marred by cliche, in which the land in the foothills region brings about redemption. Afterward, the redeemed one returns to Plainville to take up the virtuous life. But although Ricou occasionally uses the word *romance* to designate Stead's fiction, he apparently does not consider that redemption and transformation are at the heart of romance, and that it is appropriate that they exist in Stead's early fiction. Ricou sees Stead becoming more polished as a novelist in his later books, developing from a poor writer to a rather good writer. It is true that Stead developed as a writer; but Ricou's claim that Stead moves from "poor" to "good" does not take into consideration that his writing moves from romance to realistic fiction, from one mode to another.

Like Ricou and McCourt, Thomas Saunders judges Stead's early books as novels, not romances. His unfortunate introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of *Grain* should have been published separately from the book itself. In his withering comments on Robert Stead's early fiction works, Saunders consistently refers to these works as "novels." He describes them as "no more than sentimental inconsequentialities," "almost puerile," and having "no lasting quality in them and little genuine merit ... . They did not—and do not—warrant serious critical comment" (vi). Stead's literary reputation, Saunders believes, will rest on *Grain*. Recognizing that the opening chapter of this novel is self-consciously clever, and claiming that the ending is inappropriate, Saunders concentrates on what he feels is the strength of *Grain:* the characterization of Gander Stake. In creating this convincing character, Saunders writes, Stead has invested Gander with universal qualities.

Saunders' comments on *Grain* are justified. But his comments on the remainder of Stead's fiction are problematic in the same way that McCourt's and Ricou's comments are. All three apply to Stead's romances, to a greater or lesser extent, the standard of the realistic novel. The early books are not novels; they are romances and should be assessed by the standards of the romance.

Leslie Mundwiler, in his 1978 essay, "Robert Stead—Home in the First Place," recognizes this problem, that it is the habit of critics to approach Stead's fiction "by way of the jargon of realism" (199). Mundwiler's essay identifies two appropriate approaches to Stead's fiction: an assessment of its literary merit and examination of the social issues which are raised in that fiction. Mundwiler does not discuss the fiction itself, but lists the social concerns which inform Stead's fiction and pleads for critical discussions of Stead's work as literature, not merely social documents. He cites Glicksohn's and Elder's essays as the most valuable critical comments on Stead's work.

Susan Wood Glicksohn's essay is indeed a valuable one. Essentially she addresses two issues: the writing career of Robert Stead up to and including the publication of *Grain*; and the popularity and literary worth of *The Homesteaders*, to which her essay is an introduction. Glicksohn recognizes that Stead lost his popular audience as he developed as a writer, since literary realism did not appeal to the popular audience who admired Stead's early fiction. Glicksohn does not call his early works novels, but recognizes that they are romances, books that embody the ideals of their culture. She comments as well on the relevance of Stead's early fiction to his reading public:

> A lingeringly Victorian, prudish society, it demanded pure romance mixed with uplifting morality, an emphasis on the ideals of progress and Christian manliness; and it regarded with horror European and American experiments with "realism," associated until well into mid-century with sexuality and corruption ... . In 1918, a war-weary public craved idealism and romance. (xi-xii)

Glicksohn points out that "the major importance of *The Homesteaders*, however, is the flesh it moulds into an abstraction: the tragedy of the pioneer" (xx). Comparing Stead to Grove, who also wrote of the tragedy of pioneering in the alienation of the pioneer from the land, she notes a distinction between the two prairie writers:

> Where Grove's characters are giants and symbols, tragic heroes outside human affairs, John Harris is an ordinary individual. He is thus the more understandable. The slow erosion of his hopes by age, by the

> imprisoning round of necessary work, by materialism, and by "success" inspires compassion and perhaps self-examination. (xxi)

Much of Glicksohn's essay examines the strengths of the book. She concludes that although many of the characters, especially the secondary characters, are sentimentally developed, the book's significance lies in the way in which Stead develops the growing materialism in the developing prairie dwellers as they abandon a sense of community for the individual pursuit of wealth. Glicksohn's isolation of this theme of materialism is important, for the ways in which love of wealth undermines individual integrity and draws that individual farther and farther from family and community are reflected in every fictional work Stead produced.

The other critical work on Stead admired by Mundwiler is A. T. Elder's essay, "Western Panorama: Settings and Themes in Robert J. C. Stead," included in Donald Stephens' *Writers of the Prairies*. Elder examines Stead's two settings, the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and the developing prairie farm community, primarily Plainville, a Manitoba farming town. Elder concludes that although Stead's fiction does not develop chronologically from one book to the next, we do get, over the four Plainville books, a reasonably clear idea of what the prairie town was like from its founding in 1882 to the mid-twenties. More important, Elder feels, are the themes which Stead explores in his fiction: 1) the account of the West's development in the years between 1882 and the middle Twenties. Elder implies that Stead describes towns with more accuracy than he describes farm life, which he early on treats buoyantly and idyllically; 2) the discontent of farm women because of the hardness of the life; 3) the narrowness of farm life, that narrowness affecting everyone and often leading to the children's leaving the farm; 4) social and economic theory, Stead's form of social criticism, which is as close as Stead gets to the Social Gospelers; 5) self sacrifice in such characters as Dennison Grant, Dave Elden, Cal Beach, and Gander Stake. Elder does not, however, raise the issue of the effects of prosperity on the community, surely a major theme, since "Mammonism," in Stead's fiction, is a major concern from the beginning.

Throughout his comments, Elder consistently refers to Stead's fiction as "novels," rather than romances, as do the majority of Stead's critics. A recognition of romance would probably enhance Elder's comments, although his discussion is thematic rather than generic. But one of the strengths of this essay is that Elder sees a consistency of serious theme in Stead's work as a whole.

Three other critics who take a thematic approach to Stead's fiction are Clarence Karr, K. P. Stich, and Susan Jackel. Karr's essay, "Robert Stead's Search for an Agrarian Ideal," points out that although Stead advocated agrarian values, he did not perceive the city as an evil place, as did Ralph Connor, but tried to blend the urban and agrarian values. Without ever abandoning his belief in the importance of individual ideals, Stead also focused on the breakdown of the family and, by extension, the eroding of the community. He associated this breakdown with growing materialism, notes Karr, individual materialism and the materialism of churches. This essay is exceedingly difficult to read because of its lack of organization and because in placing his comments into a philosophical framework, Karr heaves so much philosophical jargon about that reading it requires more effort than the essay merits.

Stich and Jackel are much more readable. In her essay "The House on the Prairies," Susan Jackel examines the importance of houses in prairie literature. In the section on Stead, Jackel concludes that the house in Stead's fiction was often a symbol of the family's material wealth, the family representing the larger community. Stich notes that except in *Neighbours*, immigrants are not particularly visible in Stead's fiction. Stead seems more interested in the movement of Ontario residents to western Canada, and in the changes that these homesteaders must make in adjusting to the frontier. And although Stead clearly had Imperial loyalties, he apparently did not hope to see any European immigrants assimilated into British culture as Connor did. Stich does note that Stead downplays the ethnic names in giving the immigrants nicknames: "Spoof" for the Englishman and "Sneezit" for the Ukrainian. Yet, like Connor, Stead imitates accents, particularly Scottish and Irish, so long as the speaker is not an educated person or leading citizen of a community.

Terrence Craig, in his book *Racial Attitudes in English Canadian Fiction 1905-1980*, takes a harsher view of Stead's racial attitudes. Beginning his discussion by referring to Stead's imperialist attitude in his early poetry, particularly that which appeared in *The Empire Builders*, he quotes from two poems in the book:

> The land our children's sons will need,
> That land we have wide open thrown
> To heathen knaves of other breed
> And paunchy pirates of our own:
> We give away earth's greatest prize,
> And pat ourselves, and call us wise.
> ("The Prodigals," in *The Empire Builders*)
>
> Oh, I take 'em from the counter, the factory, the mine,
> They are rough-and-ready rascals till I lick 'em into line;
> They are coming, coming, coming, from the land of Who-Knows-Where,
> Black and white and many-tinted, brown and yellow, dark and fair;
> They are coming from the valley, from the prairie, from the hill,
> They are coming from the "May I?" to the country of "I will!"
> And for some the smart of failure, and for some Achievement's crown,

As I roll 'em out Canadians—all but the yellow and brown.
(*The Empire Builders*)

"Such blatant flaunting of the colour bar has seldom appeared in Canadian literature ... ," states Craig (29). Fortunately, Stead's racist views appeared more in the poetry than in the best selling fictional works. But racism does appear in the fiction from time to time. In *The Homesteaders*, a "dusky attendant" on the train maintains a submissive posture. In *The Cow Puncher*, successful businessman Dave Elden is served a meal by a Chinese servant described in unmistakably racist language:

> Dave pressed a button, and a Chinese boy (all male Chinese are boys) [sic] entered, bowing in that deference which is so potent to separate the white man from his silver. The white man glories in being salaamed, especially by an Oriental, who can grovel with a touch of art. And the Oriental has not been slow to capitalize his master's vanity. (169)

Later in the same book a Chinese "boy" again is summoned to Elden's office. In *Dennison Grant*, dinner is served by a Chinese boy. Furthermore, "You're white" is, in Stead's fiction, a meaningful compliment which brings tears to the eyes of at least one Stead character. "To call a man 'white' was to praise him as a fair and honest man of integrity. Their use of the word implied that Britons had a monopoly on such virtues and that such behaviour could hardly be expected of non-whites" (Craig, 47).

Such racist attitudes were probably an expression of Stead's imperialist loyalties which lent themselves well to the "romance of pioneering," as Harrison calls it. Stead envisioned the homesteading process largely as an extension of the British Empire. This view lent itself well to the writing of romance, and to a holding on to the past. The fading of these imperialist attachments after World War I was publicly confirmed by the Statute of Westminster in 1931. Stead's later, realistic fiction does not support imperialism.

Like some other critics, Harrison, as mentioned earlier, recognizes that Stead's early fiction works are romances. And he and Glicksohn are the only critics who do not then go on to judge these works as novels. Because of Stead's focus on homesteaders themselves, Harrison also sees in the early fiction "a good deal more evidence of the weaknesses which would eventually discredit the whole garden myth, in fiction as well as in fact" (*Unnamed Country*, 89). This very "weakness" increasingly distances Stead from romance and fosters the move toward a realistic presentation of the prairie farm experience.

At this point, then, it is appropriate to turn to the books themselves. The discussion in this chapter will focus primarily on *The Bail Jumper*, *The Homesteaders*, *Dennison Grant*, *The Smoking Flax*, and *Grain*, in chronological order, since the purpose of the consideration of Stead's fiction is to show the movement from romance to realism. *Dry Water* will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Bail Jumper

The Bail Jumper (1914), Stead's first book of fiction, is filled with characters who are, for the most part, clearly good or evil. Dire circumstances confront the hero in this book's formulaic plot. Nevertheless, in this least realistic book of Stead's there are the occasional touches of realism. The community response to a prairie fire is narrated with details that correspond to the way in which prairie fires were actually fought at that time. And the villain is not so much villainous as a product of a materialistic culture. The book itself must be classified a romance; but even from the beginning, Stead's work shows promise of the realism which ultimately characterizes his fiction.

Because *Grain* is the only Stead book whose plot is widely known, a summary of *The Bail Jumper* might be helpful: Raymond Burton, a self-educated young man from a farm, comes to the town of Plainville to accept his first job as a sales clerk in the general store managed by Mr. Gardiner. He meets and falls in love with Myrtle Vane, the only other character who is as culturally broadened as he. Two thousand dollars are stolen from Gardiner's store, and Burton, though innocent, is suspected. Gardiner posts bail for Burton, who promises to appear for the autumn assizes. When the stolen money (planted) is discovered in his trunk, Burton despairs and jumps bail by leaving town and traveling for many miles before he meets and is employed by McKay, a successful farmer with a pretty daughter who is Burton's age. Rather than marry Kate McKay and take over the farm as McKay had hoped, Burton returns to Plainville just in time for the assizes, where Gardiner, the real thief, is convicted. Burton is given Gardiner's old job, and Myrtle agrees to marry him.

As one might expect, the plot has more than its share of coincidence. Myrtle Vane and Kate McKay are best friends, having gone to school together in the East. As Burton waits in line to file a claim on a homestead, he happens to meet another Plainville resident, who shows him a newspaper article about the assizes. A train for Plainville happens to leave just fifteen minutes after this meeting, and Burton arrives at the assizes at the last possible minute. So many chance occurrences would not be believable in realistic fiction; but in romance such coincidence is commonplace. Then, too, the shape of the plot is typical of romance. For one thing, the hero, Raymond Burton, spends much of his time journeying. He travels from his farm home to Plainville. He travels from Plainville to the McKay farm, and he returns to Plainville, ready to face up to the assizes, from which he had earlier run away.

Raymond Burton's experience follows the pattern of the romance hero. His identity becomes blurred during his metaphoric descent. He leaves Plainville, a fugitive, determined to lose his identity and begin a new life farther west. Shortly after leaving Plainville, Raymond stops, quite by chance, at the home of Dr. Millar, who enables him to travel incognito by applying strong-smelling disinfectant to his face and then swathing his face in bandages to hide his identity. When Burton finally finds work after travelling west, he says that his name is "Ray," but does not give a last name. His very identity, then, is erased by the facial bandages and by his choosing to be known only as "Ray." Fearing discovery of his identity by the McKays, he decides "to disappear and try again to lose himself ..." (285). Raymond Burton has symbolically died; his descent is complete. Arriving back in Plainville just in time for the assizes, however, he proves his innocence and is elevated to Gardiner's old position. To be sure, this journeying is not a quest. It begins as a flight, Raymond running from what he perceives as an impossible situation. But it is a circular journey, for Raymond returns to the place from which he began his travels, determined to appear at his trial and the false accusation of theft. Indirectly, then, this has been for him a journey of discovery. So the romance pattern of descent and ascent, worked out in adventure after adventure, is evident in *The Bail Jumper*.

The characters of *The Bail Jumper*, like its plot, are typical of romance. Raymond is a worthy romance hero. His intelligence and integrity suggest his superiority, which is further reinforced by his understanding of poetry. Moreover, he instantly recognizes that Miss Myrtle Vane, the heroine, is also set apart from others when, on his first evening in Plainville, he sees her at a dance:

> Among the ladies was one whom Burton knew to be the guest of honour, even before he was told; a young woman his own age, or older, dressed in a creamy white, with a single real rose in her hair. Her dark, full eyelashes, the finely shaped nose and ears, the firm but sympathetic mouth,

> electrically responsive to every wave of emotion of her alert brain, were not lost upon the country youth. There were many graceful dancers, many radiant, happy-faced girls, but hers was a grace distinct from theirs and a happiness more subtle, more delightful, more pervading. The little tricks of speech which distinguish between the intelligent and the well-educated; the little delicate courtesies which distinguish between the well-meaning and the well-bred; the inborn and self-effacing refinement which is the touchstone of true culture—these were evidenced in every word, every motion, every gesture. Burton forgot about dancing, forgot that he was expected to dance, as he drank in a music ***unheard by the less discerning ears about him,*** [italics mine] and revelled in an intoxication not of wine. (19-20)

Later in the evening, when Raymond recites Oliver Wendell Holmes' "The Chambered Nautilus" for the guests at the dance, only Myrtle can understand the poem. "In the second stanza his eyes met Miss Vane's, and heaven was opened before him. She understood! Her mind was pacing the 'caves of thought' with his; her mentality was producing the current that he transformed into speech" (26). Heady stuff, indeed. These two are the elite of this book, set apart from so many who cannot understand them. Further evidence of Raymond's worthiness is found in McKay's eventual belief in Raymond's integrity, even though Raymond originally impressed him as a possible fugitive; in fact, McKay confides to "Ray" that he hopes the young man will marry Kate McKay and take over the farm for the aging man.

Also set apart from the majority of this community are the villains of this story: Riles and Gardiner. Hiram Riles, a farmer, is first described at the dance at which Raymond and Myrtle meet. He overhears his Bernardo boy, Wilfred, tell the others that he is not decently fed at the Riles farm.

> At the back of the group was a coarse, animal-looking man, with heavy, scowling features and an eye whose natural repulsiveness was heightened by a deep scar along the brow, which caused the livid eye-lids to loop outward as they approached the nose. He noted the incident, and as he

> heard the conversation a look of malignant hate deepened in the glaring eyes, and the mouth twitched in a brutal lust for revenge. It was Riles. (28)

When Riles later beats Wilfred for his comment, Raymond intervenes on Wilfred's behalf, thus incurring Riles' hatred. Riles lurks in dark alleys, he snarls, he is stingy, and he has "sold his soul to Mammon" (24). He looks and sounds like a villain in a melodrama, but contributes little to the plot.

Gardiner, although he is actually the villain of this book,is problematic in the context of popular romance. He is so courteous and reasonable that it is difficult at first to accept him as the villain, for such a character in popular romance is usually recognized early on; he is not characterized by subtlety. But Gardiner does not fit this pattern. The manager of a general store, he is attractive and rather charming. When a rural woman's home is threatened during a prairie fire, it is Gardiner who takes charge and saves the home from burning. When Raymond is charged with the theft of two thousand dollars from the store's safe, Gardiner posts bail. (We do not learn until the final chapter that Gardiner has stolen the money and framed Raymond.) But he is dishonest as well as charming. He cheats customers, who are, in turn, dishonest with him; and he tries to teach Raymond to cheat customers as well. Gardiner removes price tags and sells garments for more than the asking price, and tells customers that eight-cent items are really ten-cent items, thus convincing them that they are getting a bargain. He sells bad eggs to restaurants and damp sugar by the pound.

There is no question that Gardiner's actions are villainous, but perhaps he is not the appropriate character for *The Bail Jumper,* which, because it is popular, formulaic romance, works at a simple level. Characters like Gardiner are more characteristic of higher romance. He is a relatively complex character. In fact, he is suggestive of the sort of villain who is the hero's shadow, who represents his darker side and bodies forth the negative moral capabilities of the hero. If that is so, then he seems out of place in *The Bail Jumper*.

If Gardiner seems out of place in terms of the sorts of main characters in the book, he does contribute to the theme of materialism. Since Gardiner points out to Raymond that customers seem to expect merchants to lie to them, he seems almost a representative of a culture rather than a villain. Gardiner, in fact, is a product of his society. "Until the late 1920's," writes Jackel, "the rural West built up a social ideal that was rampantly acquisitive, to which many prairie writers responded by insisting on the superiority of spiritual resources over material ones" (165). A major issue in Stead's fiction is the danger of materialism, the acquiring of property for its own sake. In *The Bail Jumper* Hiram Riles is clearly the most materialistic character, trying to get free advice from lawyers and underpaying and underfeeding his hired hands. Riles, who has "sold his soul to Mammon" (24), seems excluded from the community. The materialism of Gardiner, on the other hand, apparently functions in collusion with the residents of Plainville. If Gardiner cheats customers little by little, they cheat him in return. When Mrs. Mandle brings in eggs to sell, she is dishonest about the number and the condition of the eggs. On an earlier occasion, Gardiner recalls, "She sold me a six-pound block of ice in a tub of butter once, and I've watched her ever since ..." (45).

Gardiner's attention to his cash register extends beyond business hours in the store itself. On Burton's first day in town Gardiner invites him to a dance, adding "The sooner you get acquainted here the better, both for yourself and from a business point of view" (15). At the dance Gardiner encourages Burton to dance as much as possible and be sociable. And when, at the end of the evening, Burton tries to rescue

Wilfred from being beaten by Riles, Gardiner whispers in his ear, "Let him go, that's not what I hired you for" (30). Gardiner is aware of his image as a store manager to the point where it controls his public behavior at all times. His materialism reaches its highest point, and with surprising subtlety for Stead's early fiction, when he proposes to Myrtle Vane and discovers that she loves Burton: "I suppose I shall lose the amount of his bail, but I forfeit it gladly for the sake of his liberty. I count such losses nothing, if only I may hope to gain—what I have asked to-night" (178). The language of Gardiner's comment is overwhelmingly quantitative. "Amount," "bail," "forfeit," "count," "losses," "nothing," and "gain" all objectify and therefore diminish "what I have asked to-night," Myrtle's hand in marriage. Later Gardiner asks Myrtle once more to marry him, declaring that his love

> "grows from day to day and from month to month. The fact I declared to you that night—that memorable night of your unfortunate accident—seems a thousand times more a fact now than it was then. I realise the prize I ask, and I am astonished that I dare ask it, but what will one not do when life is at stake? And for me more than life is at stake; if you deny me this prize I ask no longer anything that life can give." (262)

Again, the quantitative language diminishes Myrtle Vane. "Day to day," "month to month," "a thousand times," and "at stake" (twice) reinforce the objectivity of the term "prize," also used twice, to denote Myrtle herself.

Gardiner's materialism may prefigure the materialism of Clara Wilson, who woos and wins Donald Strand in *Dry Water*. Like Gardiner, Clara thinks in monetary terms when she weighs the merits of marrying either a debt-ridden medical student or a rich farmer. If so, Gardiner may represent an early movement towards realism in Stead's fiction.

But Gardiner is not alone in this materialistic focus. When a fire sweeps across the fields surrounding Plainville, numerous businessmen exploit the emergency for their own profit.

> News of the fire had soon reached the little town of Plainville, and business men of all classes did not hesitate to close their stores and shops and drive to the scene of the conflagration in wagons, buggies and automobiles. It was little assistance they could give at best, but there is a satisfaction and a suggestion of heroism in even *appearing* to assist. And the face of a merchant looming up through the smoke that enveloped a farmer's building might be the drawing card which would establish another good account on that merchant's books. (253)

With the exceptions of Gardiner and of the businessmen's response to the fire, the plot and the characters of *The Bail Jumper* reveal a moral simplicity which is comparable, in a way, to the simplicity of Connor's romances. Few characters are neutral; they are either good or bad, for Raymond or against him. The doctor, who bandages Raymond's face, and McKay, who hires him soon after, immediately believe in this young man. Carroll, in Connor's *The Prospector*, rages against the young missionary for no apparent reason except, perhaps, to demonstrate the sinner before his conversion. Herman Riles, like Carroll, rages and snarls without discernible motivation. Unlike Carroll, however, he does not experience any religious conversion; in *The Homesteaders* he is killed while trying to steal money.

But this early romance, as well as Stead's subsequent romances, are distinguished from Connor's romances by their lack of religious didacticism and by their increasingly realistic elements. Except for strong religious influences in *Dry Water*, discussed later, formal religion does not figure in Stead's fiction. Helen Fairbanks, in Connor's *The Prospector*, is a paragon of Christian virtue; Stead's Myrtle Vane is immediately recognizable as the heroine of *The Bail Jumper* because of her good looks, her tasteful clothing, and her familiarity with poetry and music. The only character who understands the poem Raymond recites, Myrtle immediately becomes Raymond's ally.

The growing materialism among western settlers is a consistent theme in Stead's fiction, usually developed didactically in the early fiction. In *The Homesteaders*, Stead's second romance, Stead again concentrates on the dangers of materialism. What distinguishes it from *The Bail Jumper* is that it has more extensive sections which are closer to realism than to romance.

The Homesteaders

Stead was probably best known to his contemporary audience for *The Homesteaders*. In this narrative John and Mary Harris, newlyweds, move from Ontario to Manitoba in 1882. They file a claim on a quarter section, build a sod house, and start a family. Twenty-five years later John has become prosperous and parsimonious. His daughter, Beulah, goes farther west to Alberta. Mary also leaves and follows her daughter. John, duped by villains Riles and Gardiner, travels to Alberta with son Allan, where he loses all his money. The villains are caught, Beulah is married, Allan plans to homestead on his own, and John and Mary are willing to start all over.

The Homesteaders is a curious blend of romance and realism. The precious language of the Prelude and first chapter contrasts with realistic descriptions of travelers on the train to Manitoba.

> "And we shall build our own home, and live our own lives, and love each other—always,—only, for ever and ever?" she breathed.
>
> "For ever and ever," he answered.
>
> A waterfowl cut the air in his sharp, whistling flight. The last white shimmer of daylight faded from the surface of the lake. The lovers floated on, gently, joyously, into their ocean of home and happiness. (8)

> The train was full. Every seat was taken; aisles were crowded with standing passengers who stumbled over bundles and valises with every pitch in the uncertain road-bed; women fought bravely with memories too recent to be healed, and children crowed in lusty abandon or shrieked as they fell between the slippery seats. The men were making acquaintances; the communities from which they came were sufficiently interwoven to link up relationships with little difficulty, and already they were exchanging anecdotes in high hilarity or discussing plans and prospects with that mutual sympathy which so quickly arises among those who seek their fortunes together under strange conditions. (12)

But when Stead contrasts Mary's naively romantic thoughts with the bleak reality of the prairies, the effective combination of the language of romance and realism reinforces the contrast between the narrative stance and Mary's perceptions. The imagery and language of romance then become ironic:

> To the young girl, naturally of romantic temperament, the journey of life upon which they had so recently embarked together took on something of the glamour of knightly adventure. Through the roseate lens of early womanhood the vague, undefined difficulties that loomed before her were veiled in a mist of glory, as she felt that no sacrifice could really hurt, no privation could cut too deep, while she was fulfilling her destiny as wife and comrade to the bravest and best of men. The vast plains, heart-breaking in their utter emptiness, could only be full to her—full of life, and love, and colour; full of a happiness too great to be contained. She watched the gaunt trees rising naked from the white forest, and her mind flitted on a thousand miles in advance, while on the cold window-sill her fingers tapped time to the click of the car wheels underneath. (16)
>
> And so in the charm and mirage of their young dream they rode dauntlessly, joyously, into the unknown. (17)

These two passages are rich with the suggestions of imagined and real experience of prairie life. In the first sentence "romantic" immediately distances us from Mary, since the tone of the narrator is more realistic than romantic. We are further distanced by the language of romance: "embarked," "knightly adventure," "veiled in a mist of glory," and "bravest and best of men." "Glamour" and "roseate lens" remind the reader of the way in which Mary anticipates her new life in Manitoba. That the realities of prairie life "loom" through this glorious mist suggests that "sacrifice," "privation," "cut," and "emptiness" are not glorious but "heart-breaking." Since the "white forest" contains "gaunt" and "naked" trees, "white" takes on the suggestion of death. But Mary does not really see these trees, for she has focused on what she is sure she will find one thousand miles further on. She anticipates a richly rewarding life, but "the cold window-sill" on which "her fingers tapped time to the click of the car wheels underneath" foreshadows the harsh monotony which characterizes her life twenty-five years later. The disparity between her dreams and the reality of her life in Manitoba is confirmed by "mirage" in the second passage. The implicit threat in these two passages becomes a reality years later when forty-five-year-old Mary Harris complains to her daughter:

> "Here I've slaved and saved until I'm an—an old woman, and what better are we for it? We've better things to eat and more things to wear and a bigger house to keep clean, and your father thinks we ought to be satisfied. But he isn't satisfied himself." (106)

Language and syntax in this short passage indicate a fulfillment of Mary's "mirage" of a quarter century earlier. The closeness in sound of "slaved" and "saved," along with their parallel structure recall the tapping of Mary's fingers to the clicking car wheels. "Better things," "more things," and "bigger house" introduce parallel phrases. The three phrases, which are all about material things, recall the monotony of what was to become a bleak marriage, of which Mary was quite ignorant as a young bride.

Stead describes the early experience of the new homesteaders in considerable detail. The unloading of their goods from the box cars, the loading of wagon and sleighs, and the trip from Emerson to their own quarter section is, for the most part, more realistic than romantic. And young Aleck McCrae, who guides the caravan of new settlers and assists them in selecting quarter sections, is competent and business-like. (Twenty years later, in *Neighbours,* McCrae provides a similar service for the Halls and the Lanes.) When John Harris exclaims on a small rise of land, "Isn't it magnificent" And all free for the taking!" practical McCrae responds, "It's pretty to look at, but I guess you didn't come West for scenery, did you?" (48-49) McCrae selects the Harris property by examining it with meticulous care:

> Forward and back, forward and back, they rode the whole hundred and sixty acres, until not a rood of it had escaped their scrutiny. On the south-east corner a stream, in a ravine of some depth, cut off a triangle of a few acres' extent. Otherwise it was prairie sod, almost level, with yellow clay lying at the badger holes ... . Even as they stood on the bank a great cracking was heard, and huge blocks of ice rose to the surface of the pond. Some of these as they rose turned partly on their edge, showing two smooth sides.
>
> "Good!" exclaimed McCrae. "There's some depth of water there. That pond hasn't frozen solid, or the ice wouldn't come up like that. That means water all winter for stock, independent of your well—a mighty important consideration, which a lot of these land-grabbers don't seem to reckon on." (50-51)

The first quarter of *The Homesteaders* combines realistic and romantic passages. Once John Harris sends Hiram Riles to Calgary to look for land which he and Harris can buy, however, the narrative becomes entirely romance. Riles, Beulah, Jim Travers (eventually Beulah's husband), and con man Gardiner just happen to arrive in Calgary at the same time. At this point the realism of the first half of the book disappears and is replaced by a blend of adventure romance and melodrama. The Swindle, so dear to the heart of Victorian popular romancers, begins. Gardiner and Riles join forces as the villains, Gardiner providing the brains and Riles the brawn of their operation. Riles persuades John Harris and son Allan, newly arrived in Calgary, to take an enormous amount of cash to a remote mountain shack, where they will, Gardiner promises, meet a hermit-like mountain man who will sell them valuable land for a fraction of its worth. (How John Harris, who falls for this obvious ruse to rob him, could possibly have the acumen to become the wealthiest farmer around Plainville is apparently a question the reader is not supposed to ask.) Riles and Gardiner attack the Harrises, and Allan fires his gun. Riles is killed, and Allan is seriously injured. His father is able to give him water because a camper just happens to have thrown away a flask at the nearby stream of water. Gardiner escapes, never having been identified by Harris, whose lantern was unfortunately snuffed out. But even though he never sees Gardiner while grappling with him, Harris manages to bite Gardiner's hand with sufficient ferocity that the tooth marks later serve to identify Gardiner as the man who stole the money and shot Allan. Jim Travers, who has overheard Riles and Gardiner plotting on their way to the cabin (he happened to be fishing by the side of the road, hidden from their view), arrives at the cabin and is overpowered and tied up by Harris. Finally a Mountie, alerted by a suspicious banker, arrives. He supervises the transportation of Allan to the nearest ranch, which happens to be the ranch where Beulah and Mary Harris are staying. Gardiner is found guilty of the attempted murder of Allan, the evidence being John Harris' tooth marks on his hand. Gardiner escapes and heads into the mountains, but is killed when he falls off a cliff.

This is clearly the most preposterous romance plot Stead devised, a sharp contrast to the realism of the first half of the book. But then Stead is more didactic in this book than in any other, and romance is appropriate when its author wishes to make a point, to preach. Those who spend their lives acquiring money, who ignore family and community relationships, and who fail to widen their cultural horizons, John Harris—and perhaps the reader—learns, may pay a terrible price. He almost loses everyone and everything dear to him. His decision to go back to farming in the face of his financial loss, and to renew and nurture his marriage signifies the beginning of his regeneration. As a matter of fact, he is then financially rewarded: a telegram from his lawyer, six pages before the end of the book, informs Harris that one quarter section of his land was sold to provide the cash requested; since Harris had earlier put the homestead section, complete with buildings, in his wife's name, that could not be sold without his wife's consent. He has a farm to go back to.

Of special interest in this book is Gardiner, the brains of the scam, for this is the second—and last—time that he might be said to function as a shadow figure in Stead's romance. In *The Bail Jumper* Gardiner suggested the dark side of the hero, Raymond Burton. Both are literate men who, because they know which fork to use, and when, are comfortable in Plainville's genteel society. Both are in sales work. Both court Myrtle Vane. But Gardiner is the urbane villain, and Burton the urbane hero. In *The Homesteaders* we again find parallels between Gardiner and the main character. Although a quarter of a century of farming has brutalized John Harris, he was originally an educated and mannered man, as is Gardiner. Moreover, Jim Travers works for both men; after he leaves Harris's employ and travels west to Calgary, he works as the hired man on the ranch which Gardiner rents. These parallels suggest a positive/negative link between the two men.

Although the specific plots are different, the narrative pattern of *The Homesteaders* is remarkably similar to Stead's final book, *Dry Water*, a realistic novel about a prairie farmer, Donald Strand, who, like John, is the richest farmer of his community, and who subsequently loses most of his property after trying to increase it: he speculates heavily in the summer of 1929 and loses all his investments in the stock market crash. What chiefly distinguishes the plot of *The Homesteaders* from *Dry Water* is the universal justice which takes place at the end of *The Homesteaders*. The good characters are rewarded; the penitent given a second chance; the evil finally punished. Order is restored, and all things are made new. John and Mary Harris begin again with limited resources. More important is the marriage of Beulah Harris and Jim Travers, formerly hired man to Harris. The young couple move farther west, a place of regeneration in Connor's and Stead's fiction, presumably to Alberta to begin their new life. Here is evident the archetypal pattern of transformation which is at the heart of romance. It is integral to all of Connor's fiction, and to Stead's early romances, but not to his later, realistic fiction. After Donald Strand's dreams crumble in *Dry Water*, there is limited renewal; diminished, he carries on in the face of defeat. And Donald's son Walter is still on the farm, though without any sign of a bride. Consequently Walter does not represent a promise of fertility to the same degree that Jim and Beulah Travers do. This is life as it often is; *The Homesteaders* presents life as Stead's public wished it might be.

Dennison Grant

Stead, for the most part, remained outside the social gospel movement, which was strong in Canada from 1890 until approximately 1925 and in which Ralph Connor was actively involved. The one exception to this is the book *Dennison Grant*, published in 1920. The War to end all wars had devoured a generation of young men and was about to give rise to a decade of such varied responses as despair, abandon, and religious fervour. *Dennison Grant* may have been, in part, Stead's answer to a public appalled by trench warfare and chlorine gas. The book is didactic, this didacticism taking the form of a utopia. It is worth summarizing the plot in some detail, for the plot structure is what is problematic about this book, and not the blend of romance and social doctrine, as Edward McCourt and Susan Glicksohn suggest.

Basically the plot is boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy wins girl. Zen is the spunky and attractive daughter of a wealthy rancher, Y.D. A crew of workers and their foreman, Transley, arrive at the Y.D. ranch to mow the hay in nearby fields. When a fire breaks out in the valley near her father's ranch, Zen is trapped by the fire, and subsequently sprains her ankle when she is rescued by Dennison Grant. They fall in love. Transley, with his eye on Zen's father's money, proposes to Zen and tells Y.D. that his daughter's answer is yes. He seals this reluctant engagement with an enormous diamond. Meanwhile, Grant suddenly inherits millions of dollars. World War I breaks out; Grant enlists, and returns when the war is over, his money having made more money in his absence. He buys an enormous tract of land which he proposes to divide into villages surrounded by farms. The village will contain, among other things, a central community building which has a library and space for dances, theatrical and music productions, and lectures. The farmers pay for their property (shares) in grain. The construction of the first village is begun. In the meantime, Grant, who has built a house for himself on his property, meets Zen, who lives nearby. She is still married to Transley, who pays little attention to her. Grant still loves Zen, as she loves him. They almost have an affair, but decide against it, and Grant marries Phyllis, his secretary.

Clearly the problem with this plot is not the marriage of romance and social theory, as Glicksohn and McCourt suggest, but the marriage of Grant and Phyllis. Glicksohn calls *Dennison Grant*

> an uneasy blend of cowboy love story and social theories, expressed in contrived scenes such as that in which the manly hero, having rescued the inevitable rancher's daughter, a free-spirited golden girl of the west, from a prairie fire, sits with her in the moonlight discoursing upon the reorganization of society. (xii)

The moonlight discussion is not so incongruous as Glicksohn suggests. Consider the circumstances: an unmarried young woman and an unmarried man, their horses having run away, are forced to spend the night together on a rock; not only are they trapped by a fire, but the woman has sprained her ankle and cannot walk. After they get the usual polite conversation openers out of the way, what are they supposed to talk about on this their first meeting, in what might, in the first decade of this century, be considered a compromising situation? Love? Certainly not, if they are well brought up young people. The night is further made awkward because they are immediately attracted to each other and would probably like to talk about love. Gentlemanly Dennison Grant would never be so boorish on this all-night date.

Stead has given his readers a formula romance whose plot has obtained at least since the medieval *Guy of Warwick*, and he fails those readers when he leaves the formula incomplete. The tradition of the formula romance implies that once the hero and heroine are introduced and their mutual attraction is established, they will eventually marry. If they do not at least become engaged by the final page, the author is breaking an implicit contract between himself and the reader. When Stead eventually wrote his two realistic novels, *Grain* and *Dry Water*, the main characters chose the wrong spouses, and the readers have not rejected the books because of these sad but believable choices. But with popular romance, the readers usually expect a happy ending.

Dennison Grant sold well, but perhaps the readers complained about the plot structure. (There are no letters of complaint from his reading public in the Stead papers. If Stead received such letters, he may not have kept them.) He rewrote *Dennison Grant*, removing the social theory and seeing to it that this time Grant and Zen married. It seems unlikely that Stead would have rewritten an already published book without having some solid reason for so doing. The rewritten book, entitled *Zen of the Y.D.*, was published by Hodder and Stoughton in England, but it was not published as a book in Canada. Instead, it was printed in seventy-two newspaper columns, by the Western Newspaper Union, for sale to newspapers as a serial publication. This newspaper edition can be found in the Stead papers in the National Archives of Canada. In the rewritten book, Transley kills the villain, dying in the process, and Zen and Grant are married on the very rock where they were once forced to spend the night. This plot, of course, is pure soap, but it may be what the readers wanted. And so long as Stead was writing romance, he kept the readers and their purses in mind: most of the letters he wrote to his publishers are about book sales and the placing of reviews in periodical publications. In this way he was quite different from Ralph Connor; for although Connor's financial statements are included in his papers, few letters to his publishers express any interest in his earnings from his books or in the popularity of those books.

The characters in *Dennison Grant* are presented as the characters of romance. Zen appears early on:

> She did not burst upon them, as Linder had half expected; she slipped quietly and gracefully into their presence. She was dressed in black, in a costume which did not too much conceal the charm of her figure, and the

> nut-brown lustre of her face and hair played against the sober background of her dress with an effect that was almost dazzling . . . . In her manner was neither the shyness which sometimes marks the women of remote settlements, nor the boldness so readily bred of outdoor life. She gave the impression of one who has herself, and the situation, in hand. (11)

This is not so romantic a description as that of Myrtle Vane, but words and phrases such as "charm of her figure," "nut-brown lustre of her face and hair," and "dazzling" are the descriptive phrases of romance. Later, Transley meets Grant at the camp where the men are mowing hay:

> He was such a rider as may still be seen in those last depths of the ranching country where wheels have not entirely crowded Romance off of horseback. Spare and well-knit, his figure had a suggestion of slightness which the scales would have belied. His face, keen and clean-shaven, was brown as the August hills, and above it his broad hat sat in the careless dignity affected by the gentlemen of the plains. His leather coat afforded protection from the heat of day and from the cold of night. (55)

The first sentence of this passage is particularly interesting in that the narrator acknowledges that the romance hero, historically, is a man on horseback, from Sir Gawain to Dennison Grant. The comment also distances the reader from this romance and indicates that Stead was well aware that he was writing romance, not realism. Implicit, too, is the growing importance of machinery as a necessary part of the farm industry, and as a crucial theme in Stead's realistic novels, yet to come. When Dennison Grant rides up to Transley's camp and, without raising his voice, informs the pugnacious Transley that he will be stopped from this illegal mowing, we know that the hero has appeared on the scene. Stead's audience, who were well versed in the vocabulary of romance, would have recognized Grant at once.

If the presentation of the two main characters is slightly understated, all the stops are pulled out for the description of the sunset which follows:

> Slowly the great orb of the sun sank until the crest of the mountains pierced its molten glory and sent it burnishing their rugged heights. In the east the plains were already wrapped in shadow. Up the valley crept the veil of night, hushing even the limitless quiet of the day. The stream babbled louder in the lowering gloom; the stamp and champing of horses grew less insistent; the cloudlets overhead faded from crimson to mauve to blue to grey. (58-9)

This sunset is clearly cliche-ridden. But the descriptions of the mowing operations and the meal set out for the work crew reflect an experiential reality not normally found in romance. And the narrative of the fire which sweeps through the hay fields is convincingly real, like Stead's other prairie fire, which appeared in *The Bail Jumper*, and which provided one of the few realistic passages in that early book.

The Smoking Flax

The Smoking Flax, like most of Stead's fictional works thus far, has the plot of romance, with touches of realism. Furthermore, it not only develops Plainville, the town of *The Bail Jumper* and *The Homesteaders*, but it introduces the Stake family, who are the characters in the later *Grain*. The plot, briefly, is this: Penniless Cal Beach, who promised his dying sister that he would care for her illegitimate son, Reed, runs out of gas just as he passes the farm of Jackson Stake. He is hired by Stake to work on the farm. It turns out, by the coincidence so common in romance, that Reed is actually the grandchild of Jackson and Susie Stake, the father being Jackie, their ne'er-do-well son, who has left home. When Jackie returns home, Cal and Reed leave, and go to work on a farm at some distance. Reed becomes ill. Jackie drives Minnie Stake to the farm where Reed and Cal are staying. Jackie poses a temporary threat, but eventually leaves, committing suicide under a passing train. Cal and Minnie marry.

There are in this book, as in the earlier romances, the realistic descriptions of farm work: the care of the animals, the plowing of the fields, the harvest. But what Stead has only hinted at in earlier works, the hard life of the farm wife, is developed as a major motif in this book. Jackson Stake and his son Gander take for granted the labour which falls to the lot of Susie Stake. It is Cal who not only helps her, but who devises ways to make her life easier. The first "household appliance" is a cream separator, run by his old Ford:

> When all was ready he started the engine, and watch in hand, set the throttle for the correct number of revolutions per minute. The separator set up its shrill whine as an accompaniment to the rattle of the old motor, and there was a moment of tense excitement, but the belt ran true on the pulleys, the skimmed milk and the cream began trickling out of their respective tubes, and the success of his machine was established. It was great business.
>
> Gander and Grit, strolling up from the horse stable, took in the situation with amused interest. The elliptic wrinkles in Grit's face lengthened until they effected almost a complete circle, save for the interruption of his nose, and Gander's Adam's apple was spasmodically gulping his emotion.
>
> "I often heard it said that some day they'd breed a Ford that 'ud give milk," said Grit, "but I never reckoned I'd live to see it." (98-99)

Dialogue in *The Smoking Flax* is a mixture of realistic and romantic. Susie Stake, confronted by young Reed is likely to become choked up, to cry. Her eyes glisten with sentimental tears at an unexpected kindness. But the dialogue between Cal and Jackson Stake is often free of the vocabulary of romance. Here, for example, is a conversation in which Cal persuades the auction-loving Jackson Stake to buy a gasoline engine to run Susie's separator and washing machine:

> "Fryber is offering a gasoline engine for sale," [Cal] suggested, diplomatically. "It could be rigged to run the cream separator and the washing machine, and to pump water when the wind is on strike."
>
> "The wife's got 'er knife into auction sales," the farmer

> commented. "She's always after me—" Jackson Stake spread his great palms with a gesture of helplessness.
>
> "You could make yourself solid by buying that gasoline engine," Cal insisted. "Just drag it home from Fryber's and hitch it to the household implements, and you've heard the last from Mrs. Stake about auction sales."
>
> The farmer raised a brimless hat and scuffled his thin hair.
>
> "How old are you, Cal? he demanded.
>
> "Twenty-six."
>
> "You're old enough to be married. Any fellow that figgers as far ahead as you do is old enough to be married." (144-5)

Cal's improvement of the buildings of the Stake farm, which, in turn, causes "Double F" to put fresh paint on his granaries, improves the spirit of the community, particularly the women. And his introduction of machinery into the home improves lives by reducing fatigue and fostering warmer relationships within the family. This is important, for in *Dry Water*, Stead's final novel, the materialism which is represented by machines contributes to the erosion of human relationships.

Stead's book-length fiction, then, from *The Bail Jumper* through *The Smoking Flax*, is primarily romance which includes the occasional realistic passage

Grain

Grain (1926), Stead's next-to-last book, is a novel, not a romance. It grows out of *The Smoking Flax* and shares characters and plot; yet the two books are written in different modes. The plot of *The Smoking Flax* is probably closer to romance than to realism; but, as Harrison notes, in *The Smoking Flax* Stead "develops the techniques of circumstantial realism evident in his earliest work to the level he will need to create the oppressive circumstances of Gander Stake in *Grain*" (102). We know about appearances, the surface of things in *The Smoking Flax:* the horses and their harnesses; the old Ford whose motor supplies the power to run the separator; the manners of the men who eat at the Stake table. But the realism is not consistent in this book, and the realistic passages seem isolated in the context of the romance.

All significant critical commentary on *Grain* recognizes that this is a novel and, if only implicitly, that its mode is literary realism. In his introduction to *Grain*, Thomas Saunders, without ever using the word *realism*, comments on the characters' typicality and the "graphic" quality of descriptions of seeding and harvesting. But the credibility of Saunders' essay is undercut by his misreading of Gander's relationship to the soil:

> Gander is as much a part of the prairie as an alkali slough or a wheatfield. He is one of those people who are bound to the soil by more than the mere accident of birth—by an inarticulate, compelling love of the land itself. (xi)

Later he describes the prairie landscape and states that Gander belongs to those whose response to this landscape is almost lyrical. Saunders' reading of Gander's character, however, is not substantiated by the novel: Gander pays little attention to the land itself. Harrison points out that when Gander helps his mother set out cabbage seedlings, he must be shown how to do this; and he is apparently unaware of the enormous prairie sky until late in the book, when Jerry Chansley points it out to him: "She had said the sky was beautiful. For the first time Gander watched it—and wondered" (*Unnamed Country*, 104-106). Ricou and McCourt have provided brief commentary on *Grain*: Ricou recognizes that in *Grain* Stead has moved from romance to realism (20, 28). And McCourt, despite giving Stead short shrift, says, "... with unusual courage Stead has chosen as hero of his novel a character distinguished only by reason of his complete ordinariness" (100).

Frank Davey's essay, "Rereading Stead's *Grain*," approaches *Grain* from several standpoints. He argues from the psychological position that Gander, believing himself deprived of maternal affection, turns to his sister Minnie and to Jo Burge for such affection. His rage at being denied his mother's love, says Davey, erupts in two symbolic rape scenes, one with Jo Burge, the other with Jerry Chansley. There are some grounds for Davey's interpretation, but he has been quite selective about the evidence he presents to substantiate his argument. The remainder of his argument is that *Grain* begins in the naturalist mode and concludes in the romance mode. The animal imagery, Davey claims, compounded by Gander's instinctive approach to experience, and crowned by Stead's unfortunate use of the term "natural selection" to describe Jo and Gander's choice of each other, constitutes the evidence for Davey's label of naturalism. Again, Davey has read *Grain* selectively: neither Gander nor the members of his family are portrayed in terms of baser animal instincts. Gander's oneness with the animals, suggests Ricou, stems from Stead's attempt to depict Gander in harmony with nature. As for the term "natural selection," the text does not suggest a Darwinian interpretation. More probably, Stead temporarily lost control of his material. Davey interprets the conclusion of *Grain*, Gander's move away from Jo, Minnie, and his mother, as representing a maturing through self respect, a satisfying closure to the book. Davey labels this romance, but the ambiguity of the final scene makes it difficult to see Gander's departure as a romance.

The term *romance* is appropriate to a discussion of *Grain*, however, for Stead's ironic use of romance in *Grain* throws into sharp relief the realities of World War I. Against the realistic setting of Plainville, Manitoba, Jackson Stake's farm, and especially Gander's consciousness at the time of World War I, the romantic concepts and the realities of war are counterpointed. A larger issue is the nature of heroism.

Ricou's comments are particularly germane:

> Historically, of course, the impulse to redefine heroism, as *Joseph Andrews* or *Tom Jones* will illustrate, is basic to the emergence of the novel as a genre. For Stead, almost two centuries later, the novel provides the same opportunity. The attempt in *Grain* to show the nobility inherent in the average man and in the commonplace event is Stead's most concerted move away from romance towards realism. (34)

And Harrison notes the ironic tone of Fielding's fiction in the first paragraph of *Grain*, where the narrator of *Grain* introduces the idea of the hero, clearly suggesting a distinction between romance and realism. (*Unnamed Country*, 102).

> Perhaps the term hero, with its suggestion of high enterprise, sits inappropriately upon the chief character of a somewhat commonplace tale; there was, in Gander Stake little of that quality which is associated with the clash of righteous steel or the impact of noble purposes. Yet that he was without heroic fibre I will not admit, and you who bear with me through these pages shall judge whether or not the word is wholly unwarranted. (*Grain*, 15)

The opening passage employs ironically the imagery of romance. "Hero" and "heroic" are both used. "Clash of righteous steel," "impact of noble purposes," and "high enterprise" are probably the phrases most related to romance. Yet the narrator tells us that this will be a "commonplace tale." "Stead's irony does not produce a denial of the romantic," continues Harrison, "but a tension between the commonplace and the romantic" (103). Important as well in this passage is Stead's claim that Gander has "heroic fibre." And circumstances do indeed substantiate that claim; for in his unglamorous way, Gander is more than once a hero. The language of romance is not limited to this first paragraph of the novel; it echoes throughout the book. Most notable is the word "hero," appearing again and again, often ironically; Gander's loaning his skates to Jo Burge turns out to be "misplaced gallantry" (56); Hamilton Stake's horse is a "steed" (115).

Although Stead did not formally divide the book as he did *Dry Water, Grain* can be divided into three sections of nearly equal length. The first section establishes the Stake family, focusing particularly on Gander and his childhood sweetheart, Jo Burge, and on Gander's limited sphere of experience: his parents' farm and the town of Plainville. The remainder of the book takes place against this background. The middle section is set during World War I. Young men, inspired by high-flown rhetoric, rush to enlist. Gander, who does not enlist, but continues farming, feels pressured to join up and do his part. His risking his life to save a farm hand from death is recognized by his fellows as a heroic act. And the final section of *Grain* is set after the war, when its reality, represented by the wounded Dick Claus and his post-war marriage to Jo, reveals to Jo the cost of her romantic notions of the hero; at the same time, this post-war reality provides Gander with the opportunity to demonstrate for the second time the nature of real heroism.

Grain is a portrait of Gander Stake, who is realistically established as a character in the first section of the book. He is an ordinary man, limited, and a loner. He is not well read, as are Stead's romantic heroes like Raymond Burton, Dave Elden, Frank Hall, Dennison Grant, and Cal Beach. In fact, he considers theoretial knowledge, gained in the classroom, of no significance; for Gander, valuable knowledge is knowing "the difference between a Deering and a Massey-Harris across a fifty-acre field" (60). His other reason for spurning education is that teachers make rules, and Gander resists regimentation. On his father's farm Gander's work is considered as important as anyone else's in the fields. At age ten he drops out of school, choosing "a man's work over a child's growing up" (Harrison, *Unnamed Country*, 102). His desire to be considered a man, not a boy, is particularized in the hitch in his walk which results from his premature choice of a belt, rather than suspenders, to hold up his pants. By the time the war breaks out, then, Gander has worked on the farm full-time for eight years, doing a man's work, and being ordered about by no one.

Another focus of this first section—and one which helps to define Gander—is the work of the farm, divided into men's work and women's work. Stead realistically portrays farming in the West and indicates an increasing mechanization, moving farming toward an "industry instead of a pursoot," as Jackson Stake comments (86). (The sight of farmers of the 1990's operating their machinery from inside air-conditioned cabs is a reminder of the further development that Stead depicted, even predicted through Gander's father: today's farmer is not only separated from the land, but insulated from the prairie air as well.) Robert Stead, himself a product of a Manitoba homestead, understands the machinery and describes its complexities:

> Just as [the binder] passed Jackson it tripped another sheaf; the ejecting arms swung upward; the needle ploughed the resilient stalks until its polished point protruded through the knotter, for all the world as though it were sticking out its tongue at its lord and owner; the compressing finger came up; the cord tightened; the beak, with two threads of twine in its jaws, made its revolution, too quickly for the eye to see, and the knot was tied. The knife cut the string, and the sheaf fell on the carrier. Then the loose chatter of the packers as, the strain for a moment relieved, they thrust fresh wheat into the loop of twine left by the needle when it receded into its sheath. It was done in a second, or at most two; every six or eight yards around that half-mile field the operation was repeated … .(44)

Jackson Stake, always trying to increase the amount of land under cultivation, will, in his wife's absence, point out that the cows and hogs and hens provide the revenue for the farm. "And Mrs. Stake, had she been standing by, would have reminded him who it was that milked the cows, and fed the hens, and mothered the young chickens, and, perhaps, threw the chopped barley to the hogs" (41). Stead, unlike Connor and the Victorian sentimentalists who preceded both writers, does not envision sacrifice and the ability to endure long hours of brutalising work as ennobling female virtues. Instead, he represents women's work—in this family, *woman's* work—as less dramatic, more monotonous and time consuming, and, until the arrival of Cal Beach, entirely non-mechanized. Moreover, it is not recognized by the men as contributing to the success of the farm. Mrs. Stake is the first one to rise in the morning and probably the last one to bed at night. In order to make the pants which Gander wears on the day he begins school, she stays up all night. By 1901, the year in which she makes these pants, the sewing machine had been on the market for nearly half a century and was in use in western Canada; yet there is no evidence in *Grain* that Susie Stake owns one, although her husband does not stint on buying machines for *his* work. It is no wonder, then, that when Gander brings home the goose he has shot, Mrs. Stake remarks, "Well, there's another goose to pluck an' clean an' stuff an' cook—" (28)

Finally, this first section of *Grain* introduces the friendship and love that develop between Gander and Jo Burge, a relationship which develops against the background of farming. The intensity of feeling which the two ultimately share is enhanced by the unadorned language with which Stead describes them and which he uses in their dialogue. Moreover, their first meeting, at age five, and during a game the children play at recess, contrasts their *real* friendship and prefigures Jo's romantic notions which will later contribute to the breakdown of their relationship. The game is narrated in language which hints of the knight's rescue of the fair lady; but the comment on their relationship, which follows the game and thus stands outside that game, is in the plainest of language:

> … as the game proceeded [Gander's] courage rose. He saw other boys distinguishing themselves and the call to glory fell not unheeded on his ears. A little girl about his own age—Josephine Burge, sister of his seatmate Tommy—in a pink calico dress which Gander thought very beautiful, was languishing in jail. Percy Marsh had rushed to her rescue, and, being one of the bigger boys, had drawn all the enemy's fire. They were pursuing him over the schoolyard, and, in the midst of this deployment, Gander went "over the top." Silently and unnoticed he dashed to the aid of the prisoner, whose hand was outstretched toward him as far as her lithe little body would reach, because it was a rule of the game that the moment she was touched by one of her side she was free. Their hands met, clasped, and home they ran in triumph together.
>
> "Hurrah for Billie Stake! Good boy, young Stake!" cried his comrades. Glory was his, and a new joy of life was upon him.
>
> That was the first time he ever held Jo Burge's hand … ." [ellipsis Stead's] (34-35)

The subtle elevation of "courage rose," "call to glory" "fell not unheeded," "languishing in jail," "rushed to her rescue" "dashed to the aid of the prisoner," "in triumph," "Glory was his," and "new joy of life was upon him" is contrasted with the artlessness of "That was the first time he ever held Jo Burge's hand," a sentence which forms its own paragraph in the text. The language of romance is attached to the children's game. The beginning of Gander and Jo's real relationship, the holding of hands, is, ultimately, not a game. Juxtaposed to the game, the comment about the children's hand holding is distanced from the game and from the mode of romance by its placement in a single sentence paragraph and by its unembellished language.

This first section of *Grain*, then, introduces Gander Stake and the Stake family, as well as the community of Plainville. Furthermore, it depicts farming as the increasingly mechanized industry it had become by the turn of the cenury. Finally, by using the language of romance ironically and by presenting a children's game as romance (and, conversely, romance as a children's game), Stead prepares the reader for the disparity, years later, between the community's naive perception of war and the reality of death and injuries in muddy trenches.

The middle section of *Grain*, extending from page 87 to page 140, takes place during the war. The initial news of the war brings the citizens of Plainville and the surrounding area into the streets of the town. Stead's treatment of the response of these people contrasts greatly with that of Dave Elden in *The Cow Puncher:* it is, sadly enough, the way masses of people who are continents away from a war greet the onset of that war. Although there is a suggestion that Jackson Stake and Fraser Fyfe think first of what this will mean to the local young men, they soon begin thinking that the war will boost the price of wheat, and from there the day's events deteriorate into a pep rally. A group of young people parade an effigy of the Kaiser on a broken-down horse. "There was an air of excitement, with high spirits, of bantering, and of unconscious boastfulness ... " (91). The local tailor, radiating self-importance, takes immediate charge of forming the First Plainville Company.

For the citizens of Plainville, before any of their sons' names are on the casualty lists, this August day is one of celebration. One of the happiest people Gander meets is Jo Burge, who greets him: "This is exciting news, Gander. They're enlisting men already. Don't you think that's wonderful?" (105) For Jo, war seems a romantic opportunity for Gander to be a hero in the eyes of the community, and not merely the inarticulate, stoop-shouldered young farmer he actually is, with dusty hair and a hitch in his walk.

> Jo was proud of Gander, but she was not blind to his defects. He was awkward; he was shy; the boundary of his world was little further than his father's farm. Enlistment would change all that. Like any honest girl, she was not satisfied that she alone should be proud of Gander; she wanted other people to be proud of him. She wanted to see the stoop

> taken out of his back, the hitch out of his gait, the drag out of his legs. Then, when the papers began to glare with reports of atrocities in Belgium, she wanted the heroic in Gander to well up and send him rushing to arms, to the defence of womankind, to the defence of Josephine Burge! Gander's heroism did nothing so spectacular. He went on working fourteen hours a day in the harvest field, associating with his father a little more closely than before, and trying to keep the war out of his mind. (106)

Here the children's game of the first section of the book is echoed in Jo's hopes that Gander will become a hero in a war that seems to be no more than an adult game to her. And, as the real relationship of Jo and Gander is contrasted with the romance form of the game in that early section, so now is Gander's determination to remain on the farm juxtaposed with Jo's high flown hopes that he will become a hero.

Ironically, Gander's heroism takes place in the dusty, unromantic fields of the Burge farm, when Gander's instant action saves Watt Peters' life:

> It was impossible to stop the engine in time; before he could so much as reach the throttle the boy would be chopped to pieces. But the great belt was rushing by within a yard of Gander's arm. To hurl himself upon it, with his whole force striving to run it off the flywheel, was the work of an instant. It whirled him from his feet, carried him for a moment like a leaf on some dark and rapid stream, then suddenly leapt from the wheel and fell like a serpent writhing in the stubble. (109)

Jo, however, does not consider Gander's thoroughly unselfish and potentially fatal action as heroic, though Gander's fellow threshers clearly perceive it as such. To their suggestion that Jo pin a Victoria Cross to his breast she responds, "Maybe he'll wear a real VC there some day, for all you know" (111). In Jo's insistence that real heroes are in uniforms and fighting on distant battlefields, we see in Stead's work an ironic treatment of romance within the context of realism. Jo, the holdout for romance, is the one who speaks of what is real, blinded by notions of romance to the real heroism which has just been demonstrated. In the books which precede *Grain* there are, to be sure, realistic passages; but although Stead has attempted to combine the two forms, he has never, until *Grain*, managed so sustained a linking of the two genres.

Stead even closes this middle section in the way a romance closes: with the marriage of Jo Burge and her war hero, Dick Claus, sent home with tuberculosis. Since Jo had told Gander that "all the girls like to have their—fellows—doing their bit," it is entirely likely that she had made a similar comment to Dick (129). But the reality of the marriage of the "hero and his princess" is a bitter one, as Jo realizes in the final section of the book.

In this final section of *Grain* the subject of heroism is both explicit and implicit. Dick Claus's bravery in enlisting in the Plainville Company is mentioned only once. When Jo Claus admits to Gander that she still loves him and that she made a mistake in marrying Dick, she immediately regrets saying so much, and compensates by stressing the sacrifice of Dick's war service:

"You see," she went on again, "he has done so much. He has made such a sacrifice. For you, for me, for all of us, Gander. For you, Gander—have you thought of that?" (195) Her belief in Dick as a hero is undercut by the guilt feelings she seems to have about telling Gander that she acted foolishly. But the focus of the nature of heroism is on Gander in these final chapters of the novel. Gander's idea to build the lakeside shelter where Dick is able to rest in fresh air is interpreted by Dick as an act of heroism. "You pulled me out of No Man's Land," he tells Gander, "as sure as did ever any soldier in the trenches. Only you won't get any VC for it" (200). The irony is that Gander has been all too happy to build this retreat for Dick, for he believes that Dick is dying. Jo's declaration, "He's my husband, and I love him, and will serve him—to the end," (194) especially the words "to the end," have motivated Gander. This is confirmed by his lack of enthusiasm when he realizes that Dick might recover.

Dick's imminent recovery, however, spurs Gander on to action which only Gander, Jo, Minnie, and Cal might recognize for what it is. His decision, both self-sacrificial and heroic, to move to the city is made on the night that Jo persuades him to stay the night at her house because of the heavy rainstorm and bad roads. This passage, the final one of the novel, not only links his decision to the discipline of a soldier, but suggests the nature of heroism in realistic rather than romantic terms, as it brings the book to a close. The lengthy passage, because of its imagery and diction, is worth quoting:

> He lay for a long while, thinking … . And while his thoughts circled many fields, always it came back to one centre … . As he lay there, fighting through a mist that was not of the rain, for the first time in his life he looked Gander Stake in the face.
>
> "You haven' made much of it, Gander, have you?" he demanded bitterly. "Not very much of it. You wouldn' take discipline—I think that's what they call it, that 'Form fours' stuff—and here you are … . Here you are." Then, with a bitter jest at himself, "And where are you?"
>
> Minnie's revelation about Cal and Reed came back to him. How little he had guessed! And the honour of the Stake family—
>
> That was a point that hurt. The honour of the Stake family!
>
> And here it was involved again, in him.
>
> Slowly he began to see that there was only one way! Minnie was right.
>
> Upstairs Jo Claus was sleeping. Or was she? He remembered that day on the school section, and wondered if she had been sleeping then … .
>
> There was only one way. It came to him slowly, but when he saw, he saw.
>
> "Gander," he said at length, "now you will take your medicine, and you will take it from yourself. Form fours!"
>
> He got up and drew on his clothes. It was still raining, although

> not so violently. There would be light as soon as the clouds lifted.
>
> He touched a match to the lamp, found an old envelope and a pencil. Then, in his wobbly hand, he scrawled a little message.
>
> "Dear Jo," it read, "I forgot to tell you that I have to leave on the morning train for the city. I've got a good job in a garage. I like working about machines. Hope the oats will come all right, and Dick, too."
>
> He was about to sign it "Gander," but a sudden dignity was upon him. He inscribed his initials.
>
> "W. H. S."
>
> Then he stole silently through the door and started his car.
>
> Jo, awake in her room upstairs, fancied she heard the sound of the motor. She ran to her window just as a flash of lightning revealed Gander's car lurching down the muddy road. (206-207)

In this passage one first notices a concentration of the language of war. "Fighting," "discipline," "form fours," and "honour" are all related to military training or to actual battle in this book. And in light of these words, the word "fields" takes on multiple meanings, one of which is the battlefield. "Form fours" is no longer the square dance which Gander once considered it, but "discipline," a self-administered medicine. Moreover, the term "bitter jest" a few lines earlier suggests that not only the jest but this medicine is bitter. The phrase "only one way," repeated once, might, in a romance, suggest the hero's marching boldly forth. Not so with Stead's realistic progatonist. For Gander "only one way" means parting from the woman he loves. Nor does he do this with the grace of the romance hero who has come to understand himself, for Gander is as innocent of experience and polish as he has always been: his hand is "wobbly" as he "scrawl[s]" a note to Jo.

The final sentence of this passage, "She ran to her window just as a flash of lightning revealed Gander's car lurching down the muddy road," is rich with the irony of realism, for Stead upends the conventions of romance in a conclusion which speaks of experiential reality. (Gander's comment to his sister, Minnie, and repeated by Minnie a few pages earlier, "Sometimes it is the brave man that runs away, isn't it?" [204] prepares us for Gander's leaving for the city.) Implicit in Gander's driving his car in this final sentence is the romance hero's journey of discovery, just as the heroine's watching her lover from a high window is a commonplace of romance. Yet Jo, watching Gander from the second story window of a bleak farmhouse, sees him by means of "a flash of lightning," a part of a storm and a traditional harbinger of troubled human affairs. "Gander's car lurching down the muddy road" is a realistic description of the way in which a car of this time might navigate a muddy country road. On the symbolic level it implies Gander's lack of preparedness for life in the city; not only does Gander lurch, but the word "muddy" suggests that Gander's future is both difficult and uncertain.

Stead has moved, then, from the Connor-like romance of *The Bail Jumper* and *The Cow Puncher* to the realism of *Grain*. In *Grain*, however, Stead does not abandon romance, but links elements of romance and realism ironically. The result is a moving narrative of the disparity between desire and reality. Stead's posthumously published novel, *Dry Water*, discussed in the following chapter, continues to link the two modes, contrasting Donald Strand's Edenic childhood with his quest for wealth and prestige in adulthood.

Chapter Four

Dry Water: Stead's Posthumously Published Novel

Robert Stead's final novel, *Dry Water,* was published in 1983, twenty-four years after the author's death, the title referring to a mirage, something desirable, but insubstantial. Protagonist Donald Strand is seduced by two mirages, one of instant wealth by way of the stock market, the other of superficial glamour when he begins to consider marriage. In this narrative, whose focus is materialism, human values are sacrificed to something illusory. The result is impoverishment. The plot and characaters of this novel bear a remarkable similarity to plot and characters in *The Homesteaders,* one of Stead's early romances, yet *Dry Water* cannot be called a romance. Sketches of an ideal community and family constitute approximately the first one-third of the book, and the remainder of the book is a realistic narrative which focuses on the development of Donald Strand. It is a novel in which romance and realism are counterpoised, each enhancing the other. A comparison of *The Homesteaders* and *Dry Water* and an examination of the blending of romance and realism in Stead's final book are the subject of this chapter. But in order to understand this book and to discuss its importance to Stead's development as a writer, one must first deal with the problems of multiple manuscripts.

Editing this novel, as did Prem Varma, is complicated by the existence of three manuscripts. Stead completed the first one in 1935. He produced another in 1946, considerably shortened. A third manuscript, prepared in 1947, is even further shortened. In a July 22, 1935 letter to John McClelland, Stead stated firmly that he did not wish to change the 1935 manuscript in any way. Yet he did shorten it in 1946 and again in 1947. Since the archival evidence we have in the Robert Stead papers does not include Stead's explicit reasons for shortening the 1946 and 1947 manuscripts, today's editor of *Dry Water* must select one of three manuscripts on which to base an edition. Varma selected the 1947 manuscript, the third and shortest of the three. The notes which she provides identify all the locations of deletions from manuscripts one and two, from lengthy deletions of several pages down to single word deletions. After examining all three manuscripts, however, I believe that Manuscript One would have been the more appropriate; and I examine the differences in Manuscripts One and Three in order to point out patterns in the large portions excised from the published edition, patterns in which realism is counterpointed with romance. Perhaps Varma, in rejecting the first manuscript, was working within the scope of traditional criticism of Stead fiction, that is, the view that he wrote novels, not romances. If this is so, then one might understand why she chose the manuscript from which much of the romance has been excised. However, the publication of the third, and shortened, manuscript has diminished the richness of *Dry Water*.

When McClelland & Stewart responded to Robert Stead's December 15, 1932 announcement that he was was working on a novel "on more ambitious lines than anything [he] had previously attempted" (Stead papers, Vol. 1, File 1-12)[1], John McClelland's interest in the manuscript was cautiously phrased in his letter of response:

> The outline of your proposed novel is, as you say, a rather amitious [sic] project, but it is rather difficult to venture an opinion or to offer suffestions [sic] until one has seen the complete manuscript, but the outline seems very good.
>
> The depression has hit the book business as it has other lines, and we are finding that the public simply do not have the money. (December 17, 1932, Stead papers, Vol 1, File 1-12)

McClelland's lukewarm response is typical of the editorial responses which Stead was to receive during the thirteen years, from 1935 to 1948, when he was trying to publish this ill-fated book. Not until 1983, when it was edited by Professor Prem Varma, was *Dry Water* finally published.

Dry Water, apparently the only novel which Stead wrote after publishing *Grain*, presents critical challenges which set it apart from Stead's earlier fiction. Varma has traced the publication history of *Dry Water* in her Introduction to this novel. A similar tracing in this study may seem repetitive, but will illuminate my subsequent discussion of the novel. I will explain, as Professor Varma does, the existence of three drafts for *Dry Water*. Varma explains her choice of the 1947 manuscript in her Introduction to *Dry Water*:

> I have used the final draft because Stead did improve his manuscript when he was asked to shorten it. His changes and deletions have made the narrative more pointed and direct. Things and events that were simply narrated at length are now presented directly or just referred to. In revising he reduced much of the pathos and sentiment, dropped much of the [sic] intrusion of the narrative voice, and culled out much of the repeated stress on Donald's sense of honour and concern with sin. Stylistically he reduced allusion and descriptive passages. The final version is thus tighten [sic] and better controlled. (Varma, xiii)

A July 1935 letter from Robert Stead to John McClelland establishes the first as the authoritative manuscript. Then, too, this first manuscript is the only one which develops the community as the context in which the individual characters are most clearly understood. Moreover, the activities of this community, largely excised from the 1947 manuscript, are presented idealistically in Part One, set in 1890; contrasting this idealism with the materialism of the same community nearly forty years later, Stead blends romance with realism in his most mature novel.

Stead wrote to McClelland & Stewart May 2, 1935:

> Under separate cover I am sending you the manuscript of my new book, which I have called "Dry Water." It is my most ambitious effort. I hope you will be pleased with it, and that it may be possible to publish it for the fall and Christmas trade.
>
> My three-book contract with Doran, assumed by Doubleday, Doran & Co., has been completed, and I am free to make a new connection in the United States, if it is desirable to do so. On account of past association I should think it proper to give Doubleday Doran the first offer, but if you prefer some other arrangement I shall be glad to have your suggestions. Or if you could care to handle all book rights, making your own arrangements with the United States and British publishers, no doubt a plan of that kind could be worked out. (Stead Papers, Vol. 1, File 1-12)

Two months later, a July 4, 1935 letter from Stead to McClelland & Stewart indicates that he was becoming anxious about the publication of *Dry Water*, for he reminded this publisher that if the book were not announced soon, it would not go onto the fall, hence Christmas, list. But McClelland & Stewart informed Stead in a July 16, 1935 letter that they had been unsuccessful in finding an American publisher. John McClelland added this suggestion:

> I would like to send it now to one of the Literary Agents with a suggestion, but before doing so I wonder if it would not be wise for you to go over it and see if you could not add some action and make revisions at any point where you think they might be needed. (Stead papers,Vol 1, File 1-12)

Stead's letter of July 22, 1935, a reply to McClelland & Stewart's suggestion that he add more action to *Dry Water*, is probably the most important evidence we have for the authority of the first manuscript:

> I am disappointed, but not disheartened, that the manuscript of DRY WATER has come back from New York unaccepted. Ever since "Black Rock" and "David Harum" New York publishers have been turning down books which afterwards became famous.
>
> It may be granted at once that DRY WATER is not an "action" story. It was not designed to be, but I do not admit that for that reason

> it is lacking in interest. It is a character story in which the effect of prairie farm environment on a number of persons, particularly Donald Strand, is, I think, faithfully portrayed against an authentic background. To introduce action which is not native to that background would I think do violence to the whole book.
>
> Perhaps I may suggest that "My Antonia," in which Willa Cather did for the American prairies what I am trying to do for the Canadian, is certainly not an action book, but it is already almost an American classic … . My own "Grain" had less action than DRY WATER—which I may decide to call THE STORY OF A MANITOBA FARM—but it was described by a Canadian reviewer as another "Maria Chapdelaine" … . [There follow here quotations from eight rave reviews of *Grain.*] I could weary you with such quotations, but there are just two points I want to make: Before publication I was urged to put more action into "Grain", (which I did not do), and the book has established for me a literary reputation with which I feel I cannot afford to trifle. On the other hand, I think both my publishers and myself should take advantage of the cumulative publicity value of my previous work by putting out something along the same tenor but of still more mature literary artistry.
>
> This, I think, we have in DRY WATER. *I have spent four years on it; it has been written and re-written; there is not a sentence in it which was not put there for a purpose* [italics mine]. I have the utmost confidence that when it appears it will be hailed as at least one of the outstanding books of the year. If the American publishers do not realize that, they need to be sold. If you share my enthusiasm for it I think you can sell it; or, failing that, that you will think of it highly enough to produce an independent Canadian edition. (Vol. 1, File 1-12)

Of all Stead's authorial comments on *Dry Water,* this is his only statement which establishes the authority of a manuscript. It is true that when he wrote this letter to McClelland, the two subsequent manuscripts had not yet been produced. But there is no evidence in the Stead papers that he ever defended Manuscript Two or Manuscript Three in the way that he defended Manuscript One. The reasons for producing the two subsequent, shortened manuscripts are implied in his correspondence with publishers. First of all, Stead's early attempts to publish the novel took place during the

Depression, a time when book sales dropped sharply. In a May 1, 1936 letter to John McClelland, Stead notes that American publisher Longmans Green, with whom McClelland & Stewart were negotiating regarding an American edition of *Dry Water*, were concerned about the number of sheets required to publish the book, a comment that suggests a concern with production costs. In response to this, Stead offered "to waive the payment of one thousand dollars advance royalties and accept in its place royalties on publication on the actual quantity of advance sales" (Stead papers, Vol. 1, File 1-12).

Secondly, after the suggestion of the reader for Thomas Allen Publishers in 1946 that Stead shorten the novel, particularly part one, Stead did just that. (Interestingly enough, "KET," reader for Ryerson Press, found in draft three a "roughness" ... "due to abridgement" (Lorne Pierce papers, Box XVI). At no time, however, does Stead defend the second or third drafts on artistic grounds, as he does this first one in the July 22, 1935 letter to John McClelland. That letter provides the authority for this first manuscript as the definitive one.

Since Stead began trying to publish this manuscript during the Depression, publication was economically feasible only if an American publisher could be found. McClelland & Stewart tried to find an American publisher for *Dry Water*, but were unsuccessful. In a November 4, 1937 letter McClelland & Stewart acceded to Stead's request that he be released from contract to them; in a November 25, 1937 letter John McClelland suggested to Stead that he change the title of the novel: "I do not think it is a good selling title" (Vol 1, File 1-14).

Stead waited eleven years before making another attempt to publish the manuscript of *Dry Water*, this time under the title *Prairie Farm*. He began negotiations with Thomas Allen Publishers in Toronto. In a May 10, 1946 letter to Stead, Allen expressed doubt that his publishing house would be able to get sufficient paper to publish *Prairie Farm*, but in the same letter he enclosed a "Reader's Opinion" on Stead's manuscript, as yet unshortened. The reader, whose name is not included in the report, began the report with a plot summary, and then made these suggestions:

> I think the story tails off rather in the too long period of self-analysis Don goes through before his visit to Winnipeg. This could be cut a little—it drags rather.
>
> The Characters are all well-drawn. The story is interesting—although its been used in almost every main detail (as far as the romance end of it goes) in other forms.
>
> THE STYLE of course, is professional, although rather rusty or pedantic in spots in the first Part.
>
> Frankly I enjoyed reading it, after getting through the first part which although too long and not unusual, yet encourages the reader to persevere.
>
> With the first part cut extensively it would be a strong and meaty story but not striking. I would think it would do well in the West and the Maritimes and Quebec because standards have not changed as much as they have in the larger centres of population in Ontario.
>
> As for his reputation as an established author carrying it to some extent, you are in a better position to evaluate that than I am.
>
> I'd hesitate to publish it to-day if it were a first novel, yet I feel there's a lot in [sic] that should be read and would be read by a lot of people.
>
> P.S.
> Suggested Title- "But Yet the Soil Remains." (Stead Papers, Vol. 1, File 1-14)

One can only wonder what Stead's personal response was to an opinion from an Ontario publisher's reader whose grasp of grammar and punctuation was tenuous, who gave the main character of the novel a nickname, whose suggested book title is hardly an improvement, who did not know who R. J. C. Stead was, and who then had the temerity to imply that Ontario was a cultural oasis in an otherwise culturally backward nation. Apparently on the strength of this "Reader's Opinion," though, Stead shortened the original manuscript of *Dry Water*, cutting much of the first section, as the reader suggested. This 1946 manuscript is then the second manuscript of *Dry Water*. Even so, the negotiations with Thomas Allen did not work out. *Dry Water* still was not published (Varma, xii).

In the Stead papers, all correspondence regarding *Dry Water* ends with the Thomas Allen "Reader's Opinion." Stead did make a third attempt to publish this novel, as will be seen; but since none of the relevant correspondence is to be found in the Stead papers, he may not have kept any of the correspondence from this third attempt. For some writers this might not be particularly significant, but Stead was meticulous about preserving everything he wrote. He made carbon copies of outgoing mail, even the briefest of notes, and seems to have saved most, if not all, of his incoming mail. He even typed the pencil-written pages of his daily journal, saving the original pencil-written pages as well as the typed copy, perhaps with an eye to its subsequent archival value. His failure to save the correspondence regarding his final attempt to publish *Dry Water* seems at first a puzzling omission. In light of what happened, however, this uncharacteristic failure to save the correspondence may suggest Stead's ultimate anger and perhaps even feelings that he had been betrayed by Canadian publishers.

Although Stead's correspondence regarding his third attempt to publish *Dry Water* is not to be found in his own papers, it is available in the Lorne Pierce papers in the archives of Queens University. Late in 1947 Stead sent the shortened, third manuscript, now renamed ***But Yet the Soil Remains***, to Lorne Pierce, editor of Ryerson Press. Varma quotes most of the October 14, 1947 comments of KET, presumably a

Ryerson reader; the comments in their entirety, I believe, further reinforce KET's positive assessment of the novel:

> This story of a Manitoba farmer is one that is worthy of the Ryerson Press. The author has a good story in the life of Donald Strand from 1890 to 1929, and he tells it well. It is not common in a novel to have a successful farmer as the hero, and the treatment of farming in Western Canada is well done in favour of the farmer, and that "calling" in general. Character portrayal is good, and the development of Donald's character over the years is almost the core of the story. The author has been careful of the tiniest detail even, and has made many delightful incidents that will be remembered for some time. (This is more especially true of the boy's early life.)
>
> When the lose [sic] ends are woven in more closely (roughness due to abridgment) this will be very good. Keep it for further consideration! (Lorne Pierce papers, Box XVI)[2]

There is no evidence that KET ever saw the 1935 manuscript, but the comment on the novel's "roughness due to abridgment" might provide a modicum of support for the superiority of the first, unabridged manuscript.

Although Ryerson could not publish the book, Pierce's letter of November 10, 1947, was positive:

> I like your manuscript tremendously and would say that it was accepted except for the fact that we have just off the press this week McCourt's Fiction Award winner, Music at the Close, and it is a dead mate for your own. The subject is very similar. May I suggest that you submit this for the Ryerson Fiction Award closing the last day of February and, if you like, leave the manuscript with us? You stand an excellent chance of winning. However, you must decide in your own best interests. (Lorne Pierce papers, Box XVI)

Stead was happy to submit the manuscript for the Ryerson award. His reply to Pierce on November 14, 1947, not only reflects his hope that this manuscript would at last be published, but suggests the frustations which he had suffered thus far in his struggle to publish *Dry Water*.

> Your suggestion that my book would have a good chance of winning the Ryerson Fiction Award appeals to me, and I am leaving the manuscript in your hands for that purpose. In view of the fact that it has been kicked around by some of the U.S. publishers and their Canadian satellites I can think at the moment of nothing more satisfactory than having it win such a distinction. (Lorne Pierce papers, Box XVI)

As Varma notes, Ryerson Press sent a letter to Stead, informing him that he had won their annual book award. Stead's joy was short-lived, however; for a second letter followed immediately informing him that Ryerson had decided not to make a book award for that year (Varma, xii). In a letter to Lorne Pierce on April 22, 1948, Stead says "I was still licking my wounds when your telegram arrived asking me to return my manuscript for further consideration. It went forward in today's mail" (Lorne Pierce papers, Box XVI). This is the last direct reference to *Dry Water* (at that time named *But Yet the Soil Remains*).

There is no evidence that Stead made any further attempts to publish this novel. He died ten years later, in 1959. Twenty-four years after Stead's death, Tecumseh Press published *Dry Water*, edited by Prem Varma, based on the third manuscript, which Stead had submitted to Ryerson Press in 1947.

An examination of the major differences between the authoritative 1935 manuscript and the posthumously published 1947 manuscript is an illuminating process: much has been lost because of the deletions Stead made. I shall point out and comment on the lengthier deletions. In order to understand clearly the deletions from the 1935 text, though, a plot summary of the novel is necessary, for few readers are familiar with *Dry Water*. The plot summary which follows is common to all three manuscripts of the novel. Manuscript One is the most fleshed out of the manuscripts. Manuscipt Two is considerably shortened, and Manuscript Three, on which the published novel is based, is spare, almost skeletal in places; but the plot is the same in all three manuscripts. Page numbers in the plot summary refer to the published edition of *Dry Water*, based on the 1947 manuscript, and are preceded by Varma's name. Unfortunately, many typographical errors mar the published edition; such errors are noted ([sic]).

In *Dry Water*, which is divided into three parts, Stead returns to the subject of materialism. Part One of this novel develops the social setting in which we see Donald Strand, orphaned at age ten, and living with his Uncle Jim and Aunt Annie Strand on their farm near Alder Creek, Manitoba, in 1890. In later sections of the book the adult Donald is implicitly contrasted with the child Donald. This initial section establishes the pioneering community whose strong commitments to religion and family foster their cooperative, non-materialistic values. Donald grows up as a member of the Strand family, who are, in turn, part of the farming community, just as Donald, the individual, is a part of that community. Part One is essentially a series of sketches that introduce the Strand family and the Alder Creek community. Consequently, plot is discrete, limited to each sketch; continuity of plot is provided by the consistent range of characters who figure in each sketch. The topics of these sketches include 1) Donald's arrival just before a blizzard and the harmonious family life on Jim and Annie Strand's farm; 2) the introduction of Donald's lifelong love for his cousin Ellen Strand and her mild childhood jealousy of Hester Harp, who also interests Donald; 3) family and community religious life, including family prayers each night; a heavily attended Sunday morning church service shortly after the blizzard, at which the offering, collected in Uncle Jim's hat, amounts to forty cents (forty-three cents in Manuscript One); a meeting of the Band of Hope, a children's religious group which stresses temperance; 4) a visit from a neighbouring family, which visit produces an evening of homemade fun; 5) a long conversation between Donald and his best friend, Jimmie Wayne, as they compare their futures as farmer (Donald) and lawyer (Jimmie).

In the next to last chapter of Part One the image of the mirage is introduced as Uncle Jim and Donald drive to town in a horse drawn wagon. Conversation along the way centres on Jimmie Wayne's wish to be a lawyer, Donald's wish to be an engineer, and Uncle Jim's mild complaints that the prices for what the farmer both buys and sells are set by town merchants. As the two approach the town and the Alder Grove grain elevator "heave[s] its bulk a little larger across the intervening plain" (Varma, 40), Donald sees a mirage on the road. Harrison has noted water as a consistent image in Stead's fiction. In this final novel it functions metaphorically not so much as the nurturer of life but as a threat to productive human life.

> Uncle Jim chuckled. "That's the heat," he explained. "Don' ask me why, but it looks like water. When men are dyin' o' thirst in the desert, that's what eggs them on, promisin' water for their burnin' throats, but never givin' it. You see, it moves ahead o' us; we'll never reach it, no matter how far we drive. Dry water, I call it, Donal'."
>
> "My father and mother could not have been drowned in water like that," Donald observed, soberly.
>
> Then Uncle Jim made a strange remark: : [sic] "Many a man is, Donal', and' [sic] may ye never live to know what I mean!" (Varma, 41)

Uncle Jim Strand's freedom from materialism is implicitly contrasted to his nephew's subsequent thralldom to property, for in Parts Two and Three Donald, wealthy by local standards, nearly drowns in such mirages in his choice of a wife and in his attempt to increase his property.

The final incident of Part One reinforces the Strand family harmony and the strength which grows from that harmony: a summer hailstorm wipes out the abundant wheat crop of the Alder Creek farmers. The Strand family, after dealing as best they can with the damage to their house, characteristically sit down together for a cup of tea. Part One ends here.

Materialism, especially the ephemeral quality of wealth, is examined in Parts Two and Three against the social background developed in Part One. Part Two, set in 1901, eleven years later, focuses on Donald's acquisition of a farm and his subsequent engagement to the fortune-hunting Clara Wilson. Donald, now age 21, inherits five thousand dollars (six thousand with accrued interest) from his parents, who had died eleven years earlier. This section of the novel begins with a none-too-subtle paragraph in which Donald "waltz[es] the new binder" through Uncle Jim's wheat fields.

> From his high seat he watched the whole mechanism; the reel striding *implacably* forward into the standing crop, the *glitter of knives* as they sheared the yellow straw, the momentary poise of the *severed stalk* before it *fell headlong* on the canvas, the *full-throated vomit of prostrate wheat* as it was *hurtled* into the packers, the swift circle of the *discharge arms* and the fleeting wink of the knotter ere the sheaf was *shot* onto the carrier. It had become routine to him in his eleven years on the farm but a routine that never sagged into drudgery. There was music in the hum of the drive chains and poetry in the swaying wheat [italics mine]. (Varma, 47)

Donald may consider driving this new binder akin to waltzing, and this machinery may provide his poetry and music; but Stead's language in this introductory paragraph describes the binder in menacing terms and reflects not only the value system, but the future business methods of Alder Creek's richest bachelor farmer.

Uncle Jim informs Donald that the Farquhar farm is about to be sold for debts of twelve hundred dollars. The farm being a potentially good buy, Jim suggests that Donald offer Mr. Farquhar fourteen hundred dollars, but no more than fifteen hundred dollars. Donald, however, drives a hard bargain, entirely lacking in compassion for the plight of the poverty stricken Farquhar family, acquiring the farm for thirteen hundred dollars instead. Farquhar emerges from the deal penniless. Donald decides not to tell his uncle the price he paid for the property.

Donald wants very much to marry his cousin, Ellen Strand, but she refuses on the grounds that their being first cousins would jeopardize the health of their children. So Donald begins courting his childhood friend Hester Harp, a young woman who, if she is plain and unimaginative, is a hard worker and potentially a suitable wife for a farmer. Meantime, Clara Wilson, the pretty and stylish school teacher, sees Donald as husband material far preferable to the debt-ridden medical student whom she is expected to marry. Appealing to Donald's sexual passions, Clara manipulates him into a marriage proposal—she is actually the one who does the proposing. Part Two ends at this point.

Part Three begins twenty-eight years later, in August of 1929. Donald, now forty-nine years old, is a prosperous farmer, whose farm property, machinery, livestock, savings, and investments make him worth $75,838.40. (This includes his prize bull, Sundown Chieftain II.) He enjoys the company of his children and cares for his widowed Aunt Annie, who lives with them. He would like to have a warm relationship with Clara, but she has, for years, withdrawn into her own room much of the time.

Donald and Clara drive to visit Jimmie and Ellen Strand Wayne in Winnipeg, where Jimmie is a wealthy lawyer. The stock market is feverishly active, and Jimmie persuades Donald to invest considerable sums of money. Clara and Jimmie begin an affair. When the market crash occurs, Jimmie commits suicide. Donald loses everything but the farm property and the buildings on that property. Ellen returns to Alder Creek, where she and her mother move into a small cottage. Donald's son Tom, who has embezzled three thousand dollars from the bank where he works, and lost it all on the stock market, plans to steal a car and drive to Mexico; Donald, however, promises to do what he can for the boy.

But Donald meets his financial loss like a man. In the final chapter of the book he is plowing his fields with a team of horses, apparently having forfeited much of his machinery. He no longer calculates his worth in dollars, but has, in the months since the stock market crash, rediscovered some of his childhood values. He decides "that perhaps this last year had been most profitable of all" (Varma, 224). But the book does not end on an unqualified positive note. Although Donald now has time again to notice the earth's natural beauty, the final word reminds us of the ambivalence of human experience: "A star or two looked out. The air became suddenly cold. Donald unhitched his team and started for home, plodding behind them in the gathering darkness" (Varma, 225).

A reading of Manuscripts One and Three together reveals what has been lost in the shortening of Manuscript One by approximately 90 pages. (Manuscript One is in Pica type, and Manuscript Three in Elite type; moreover, there are half pages and pages numbered 244A and 244B in Manuscript One. This makes an accurate count of the page deletions difficult.) Gone is much of the background against which we perceive Donald Strand growing up and becoming the wealthiest farmer in the Alder Creek area. And Donald is a problematic character in the published manuscript, for in it the apparently sudden emergence of his materialism is not clearly explained. Manuscript One, however, does provide the ground against which the figure of Donald is illuminated. The excised passages focus mainly on three areas: 1) the development of the original Alder Creek community of homesteaders, whose non-materialistic values foster a cooperative spirit lost by the time Donald is middle aged; 2) a close look at the Strand family, whose loyalty, hard work, and success are nurtured by kindness and affection for one another; a consideration of the non-monetary nature of Uncle Jim's "wealth"; 3) evidence for the beginning of Donald's later materialism and his lack of sympathy for those less successful than he.

All three manuscripts for *Dry Water* emphasize the values of the Strand family and of the Alder Creek community in Part One. We see the *ideal* family and the *ideal* community; the darker side of human experience is reserved for later parts of the novel. The value which the community places on hard work and strict religious observance in these homesteading days is tempered by such qualities as cooperation, kindness, compassion, and love of recreation. Three lengthy sections depict the community at worship, at school, and at play; but only the first of these, the Sunday morning service after the blizzard, exists in Manuscript Three. Unfortunately, the section about school, taught by Mr. Matthews, was deleted. Deleted as well was the long section depicting the annual community picnic and baseball game at Alder Creek school.

In the following section I shall describe and comment on selected passages of one paragraph or more, in terms of three areas of focus. (A chronological listing of the 59 major changes in Manuscript One can be found in Appendix B.) There are many changes of only a few words; and Varma has noted them all, down to the most minute. But the one-word and even one-sentence deletions do not reveal the distinctions between Manuscripts One and Three so readily as the larger deletions. The texts with which I have worked are photocopies of Manuscripts One, Two, and Three, which the Stead family kindly permitted me to have, from the National Archives of Canada. Few people have ready access to these manuscripts, though. And so, for the convenience of the reader, my references to Manuscript Three will actually be to the published edition of *Dry Water*, whose text is Manuscript Three. I shall describe, and sometimes quote, the deletions from the 1935 manuscript and, at the same time, note the page in the published edition of the novel where the deletion occurs, placing these notations in bold face at the beginning of the description of each deletion. Thus, **MS One 19-25; Varma 15** means that the described deletion which follows is found on pages 19 through 25 of Manuscript One. The location of this deletion from Manuscript Three is on page 15 of Varma's edition, where she has so noted.

Only Manuscript One assigns seasons to Part Two (Summer) and Part Three (Winter). The title page of Part Two of Manuscript Two indicates that Stead changed his mind after he typed this draft, though, for the word *Summer* is crossed out, just as the word *Winter* is crossed out of the title page of Part Three of Manuscript Two.

MS One 1-3; Varma 1-3:

Stead rewrote the first two and one-half pages of Manuscript One. In the first manuscript, passengers are described boarding the train, claiming seats. Mrs. Barrow's direct, last minute conversation with Donald is indirectly reported in Manuscript Three. The conductor's conversation with Donald is direct in MS One, indirect in Manuscript Three. In Manuscript One Donald cries a little as he thinks about the death of his parents. This is replaced, in Manuscript Three, with his watching the snow covered prairie.

Thus the warmth of community feeling in Part I is reinforced as early as page one of Manuscript One. What Mrs. Barrows, who puts ten-year-old Donald on the train, says to Donald and to the conductor, is directly related in Manuscript One, but only indirectly in Manuscript Three. Although she is not a resident of Alder Creek, Mrs. Barrows' warmth prepares us for the small community in which Donald is to spend the rest of his childhood.

MS One 3-4; Varma 3:

The station agent in Alder Creek tells Donald that he will look after the boy until his uncle arrives; jokes with him a bit; and asks his wife to give Donald some supper. This short passage further prepares us for Alder Creek. The station agent and his wife care for Donald, although they are in no way obligated to him, by chatting with him and feeding him. All of Donald's experiences on this day of changes have been gentle and nurturing, and they prepare the reader for the Strand family, a small unit of the Alder Creek community.

MS One 40-47; Varma 29:

This lengthy section is the only one which depicts Alder Creek school. Mr. Matthew, the teacher, failed his examination for teacher certification, but Alder Creek folk liked him because he was male and because he did not smoke or swear; so the Department of Education extended a teaching certificate to him. He eats lunch at the Strand house and is a favourite and role model of Donald and Ellen. Like the Strand family, then, he is a part of the Alder Creek community and a nurturing influence on all the children. Donald gets into trouble for fighting and even swearing while on the school playground—his opponent, Freddie, two years older, insulted Ellen. Although the Strands feel duty bound to disapprove of Donald's action, their ambivalent response is a combination of mild censure of Donald and strong censure of Freddie. Donald, however, feels that God has assigned him to the everlasting torment of the damned. In desperation he consults Mr. Matthews, whose compassionate response puts

Donald's fears to rest.

MS One 60-65; Varma 35:

The event occupying everyone's minds these days is the upcoming summer picnic at the Alder Creek School, the "community event of the year." Elaborate arrangements are made for the provision of food. Older boys cut saplings for shade, beside which they place temporary benches. The married men and single men form the two opposing baseball teams. Settlers arrive in their Sunday clothing. Women nurse and change babies. Men talk about weather and crops. Here we see the community at play. So popular is this annual event that several hundred people attend, indicating that recreation is important to them.

MS One 102-109; Varma, 69:

Tom Strand and Katie Crisp are married. The wedding reception, a huge community affair, includes everyone, from those still dressed up for the wedding to threshers on their way home from work. There is circle dancing and square dancing. All the food is brought in by members of the community. Donald becomes angry with Harry Long, who is drinking. Outside the house he shakes Long like a rat and asks someone to take Long home.

This passage not only shows the community playing and celebrating, but reinforces the cooperative spirit of Alder Creek. The wedding reception is a surprise to Tom and Katie. All the food is furnished by Alder Creek women who are not even related to bride or groom. Then, too, this social occasion includes the entire community, not only those who were able to come to the wedding, but those as well who were busy threshing; it is significant that the threshers are there in their work clothes. The inclusiveness of this evening is further reinforced by group dancing: square dancing, which involves groups of four, and partularly circle dancing, which can include as many as wish to dance.

These passages excised from Manuscript One flesh out a community which is too sparsely developed in Manuscript Three. They detail an idealised, non-materialistic community, a memory of childhood sifted through the central consciousness, Donald Strand. As well, the unity of the community provides a contrast to what Alder Creek residents become thirty-nine years later, self serving, acquisitive folk, isolated from each other. This development of the community is a major focus in Manuscript One, but inadequately developed in Manuscript Three.

The development of the Strand family constitutes a second focus of Manuscript One which is greatly diminished in Manuscript Three because of excised passages. The Strands, a single unit of the larger community who espouse the values of that community, function harmoniously under the direction of Uncle Jim and Aunt Annie. Introduced in the depiction of this family is a consideration of the nature of wealth. To Donald Strand thirty-nine years later, wealth is his net worth, $75,838.40. But as a child he reckons Uncle Jim's wealth in terms of an adequate roof over his head and enough food to eat. For the adult Donald before the 1929 stock market crash, there will never be enough money; he must acquire more property. But Uncle Jim Strand has enough wealth; he does not continually yearn for more, as his nephew does in adulthood. Much of this is deleted from Manuscript Three.

Especially lost in the deletions is the character of Uncle Jim. This is a major loss, since he is the man who teaches Donald how to operate a farm successfully and who serves as a model of what, ideally, Donald might have become. In Manuscript Three

Jim Strand is a two-dimensional figure who remains undeveloped. But in Manuscript One he is gentle with his children most of the time, demanding of them when it is time to work, and stern when they transgress. He accepts responsibility as the member of a community, trudging through deep snow to warm the schoolhouse for the Sunday church service; he is an involved father and the best farmer in the district; and he can amuse himself by chuckling his way through a boys' book before napping on his son's bed.

MS One 16-18; Varma 15

On a day when the Strands are waiting out a blizzard, Ellen and Donald, like two children in a fairy tale, go down to the cellar pantry, where food is stored. The passage is so important that it bears quoting in its entirety:

> Ellen led the way down the steep steps under the upper stairs. She carried a lamp with her, and there was a sweet, earthy smell and a wonderful quietness down there where even the shaking of the storm no longer reached them. Ellen showed him proudly the great bins of potatoes, the barrels and boxes filled with turnips, onions, carrots, beets; the shelf loaded with cabbages; the jars of preserved blueberries, raspberries, currants, strawberries, gooseberries, rhubarb mixed with black currants to keep it from going flat; the shelves with milk pans, where the cream was rising; the tub of butter, the home-made cheese. Ellen, with something of the manner of a baroness in her feudal castle, let the mass effect of so much food sink in upon him.
>
> "My, but you've got a lot to eat," he exclaimed, when he could find words for a discovery so tremendous.
>
> Ellen was delighted. "Haven't we, though? And this isn't all" Carrying the lamp, she led him behind the stairs.
>
> "What do you smell?" she asked.
>
> Donald sniffed. "Everything," he answered, with some truth.
>
> "Yes, but what special? Lean over this way." With a hand behind his head she drew him toward her. "Smell hard," she told him.
>
> Donald smelled hard, as directed. "Apples," he said suddenly.
>
> Ellen danced, somewhat to the danger of the lamp. "We had a whole barrel," she said triumphantly, "all the way from Ontario. But they're awful dear. Pa had to pay four dollars for them this year. Put

> your head in the barrel and take a good smell. Maybe Ma'll let us have one to eat this afternoon, if we do well at our lessons."
>
> Donald helped himself intemperately to the goodly smell, but one couldn't hang head-down in a barrel forever, and the indulgence had to come to an end.
>
> "And that isn't all," Ellen went on to tell him. "Up in our room to keep it dry we have a barrel of white sugar, and a barrel of brown sugar, and nearly a whole chest of tea! And out in the granary we have bags and bags of flour, and half a beef, and a whole pig, and whenever we want a hen, why, we just wring its neck."
>
> Donald was deeply impressed with the enumeration of so much wealth. Evidently Uncle Jim was a rich man. He began to feel rich himself. Romanticism was upon him.
>
> "It's like a pirate's cave, isn't it, Ellen?" he asked. "You know—where the pirates store all their treasure, and no one could ever find it. We could live here for ever and ever, and the storm could never get in, and no one could ever find us."
>
> Ellen was standing close beside him. Her free arm had linked itself around his. "Couldn't we, though?" she agreed. They stood there for some minutes, giving free play to the long dreams of childhood. Then a whispered confidence from the girl, "I'm glad you came to live with us, Donald."
>
> "So am I," the boy agreed. But at that moment the door at the top of the stairs opened and Lizzie's voice broke the spell. "My goodness, children, are you never coming with those potatoes? It's away after eleven."
>
> "All right," Ellen answered dutifully. "Coming in a minute." Then, aside to Donald, as they hurriedly filled a basin at the potato bin, "Children! She called us children. Lizzie thinks because she's got a beau she's all grown up. Huh!" (MS One, 16-18)

Since Donald's and Ellen's lifelong love is just beginning, this powerful scene, in which food and sexuality are linked, is one of the most effective love scenes in the novel. The cellar provides shelter from the blizzard and, metaphorically, from all storms. The barrel of apples which the children smell suggests the Edenic quality of the children's relationship and, linked with the sheltered pantry, a potential sexuality which is mutually nurturing as well as procreative; but the reality of their adult experience yet to come is sadly ironic. Each eventually marries the wrong person, Donald's and Clara's marriage based on his money and her external beauty, and Ellen and Jimmie's childless marriage apparently on convenience and financial security. Moreover, the images of food as well as Ellen's and Donald's discussion of the "wealth" of Jim and Annie Strand introduce the major focus of the book. Just what constitutes wealth is a question which Donald ponders throughout the novel. In fact, when Donald and Ellen are nearly fifty years old and both are materially wealthy, they recall this trip to the cellar, remarking that Jim and Annie were probably the truly wealthy ones. The omission of this scene from Manuscript Three is a great loss to the book.

MS One 19-25; Varma 15:

Here is cut a long passage which takes place on the same day that Ellen shows Donald the riches of food stored in the cellar. It begins with the mid-day meal at the Strands, and ends as Donald goes to bed. After this amply satisfying meal, Donald and Tom go out to explore the stable, only after Aunt Annie dresses Donald for the blizzard, which is still raging. Hand in hand the boys make their way through the storm to the stable, where Uncle Jim and Tom do chores while Donald watches. Then he is allowed to help. Uncle Jim promises to teach Donald to ride a pony. Then they inspect the pigs and return to the house. Lizzie helps Ellen and Donald with their lessons. Tom and Donald play checkers. Uncle Jim goes to Tom's room, where, covered with "two heavy patch-work quilts," he snickers happily while reading a book by Captain Marryat, then falls asleep. Later, supper, milking cows, evening prayers, then off to bed. This passage, like so many passages eventually deleted from Manuscript One, further develops the Strands as an ideal family and places them in counterpoint to Donald's family in 1929.

'IS One 29; Varma 18:

Uncle Jim, despite Aunt Annie's protest, will go through the cold weather to ready the schoolhouse for church.

This short paragraph, like much which has been deleted from Manuscript One, contrasts Jim Strand's household with Donald's household nearly forty years later. Uncle Jim is determined to ready the schoolhouse for the community worship. In the summer of 1929, Donald spends his pre-church time calculating and admiring his wealth.

MS One 35-37; Varma 24:

This passage depicts fairly routine family life, their work, their play, and their worship.

> The work on the farm, although not heavy, occupied most of the hours of the short winter day [sic], and the evenings were spent in study, in reading, or playing with Ellen's calendar-cards or checkers with Tom. Weeks would pass without any companionship except that furnished by the household or the neighbors who gathered for the Sunday service. (MS One, 37)

MS One 76-77; Varma 42:

Donald and Uncle Jim visit the new grain elevator. Donald watches the workings of the elevator from the engine room. Donald has a snack of cookies and milk, since Uncle Jim realizes the boy is hungry.

If Uncle Jim is not sufficiently developed in Manuscript Three, Donald is not only inadequately developed, but problematic as well. He grows up in a non-materialist home which is a part of a cooperative, non-materialist community. One would therefore expect him to behave rather like his Uncle Jim upon reaching adulthood. But no. As section two begins, Donald drives the new binder through a wheat field. We are unprepared for the menacing language which characterizes this paragraph. We are even less prepared for Donald's sudden metamorphosis into a compassionless businessman soon after he learns of his $5,000 inheritance. The money seems to change him overnight, yet his upbringing with the Strands has placed little value on money.

A close examination of Manuscript One yields numerous short passages, excised from Manuscript Three, where Donald appears increasingly materialistic throughout the narrative. This trend in Donald's character is especially manifest in two areas: his lifelong rivalry with Jimmie Wayne and his adherence to an Old Testament religion which leads him to believe that those who play according to the rules prosper; those who go their own way can expect failure.

MS One 25; Varma 16:

Donald wonders whether his parents' death was the will of God. Then, to put this possibly sinful thought out of his mind, he thinks of his great happiness with his new family.

MS One 27-29; Varma 16:

Uncle Jim reprimands Donald for reading the newspaper on Sunday. Donald, afraid that God will punish him for his sin, is comforted by Ellen, who says she sometimes reads the paper on Sunday because there is nothing about newspapers in the Bible. Even as a ten-year-old, Donald seems to believe in a God who exacts "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Those who do not follow the rules can expect disaster.

MS One 53-65; Varma 35:

Donald helps with the vegetable gardening and with the soapmaking. Ellen, Lizzie, and Donald chat about the money made by doctors and lawyers. Walter Spence "happens" by at supper time. There is talk of a new grain elevator. Tom, Donald, and Walter go to Walter's cabin overnight, where they go out crane shooting. Unlike Tom and Walter, Donald says his prayers before bed, worrying about his soul.

Although the passage is largely about the daily work of the Strand family, the short passage about the income of doctors and lawyers gives some evidence, albeit slim, of the property-minded man Donald will become. As well, it develops Donald's leaning toward a religion based on rules and punishments for breaking the rules.

MS One 116; Varma 75:

Mrs. Farquhar is angry that salesmen, trained to take advantage of the weaker sort, take advantage of people like her husband.

At this point in the novel Donald has just bought the Farquhar farm for much less than it is worth, congratulating himself on getting such a good bargain. The nearly destitute Farquhars face a bleak future, but Donald feels no responsibility for them, since Mr. Farquhar has foolishly bought farm machinery he did not need. That is, Farquhar has not played by the rules that a good businessman must follow. His conclusions about Farquhar may well be informed by his religious beliefs: say your prayers or go to hell.

MS One 127-128; Varma 82:

Donald kneels to say his prayers before going to sleep, even though Jimmie, who is visiting the Strands, does not.

MS One 178-179; Varma 109:

Donald contemplates the validity of Aunt Annie's religious doctrines, the nature of death, and the possibility of after life. He decides to think about it "when the business of life was less pressing" (179). At this point in his life (the summer of 1929, although this third section of the novel is called "Winter" in Manuscript One) Donald apparently thinks of religion and business as interchangeable. His detailed listing of his net worth in his office reads like a litany; later, he sits in church, not hearing a word of the sermon because he is, for the second time that weekend, calculating his net worth.

MS One 245-247; Varma 165:

A clever salesman tries to sell Donald a combine. Donald declines, for he feels that he does not need a combine. It is illuminating to compare this incident with that of Mr. Farquhar and the salesmen who sold him useless machinery. Donald operates on good business principles (rules); Mr. Farquhar did not.

MS One 209-214; Varma 139:

Conversations after the Sunday morning church service. The minister tells Donald how the presence of a successful farmer is a "fine influence" on the congregation; Donald takes Aunt Annie to the cemetery to visit Uncle Jim's and Katie's graves while Clara visits their son Tom at his boarding house. Donald thinks about the ephemeral quality of life, of all those who have gone before him, those who will follow him. He hopes that his funeral will be a big one and that people will say that he was a success. Walter Spence asks for a loan, and Donald works out a clever deal. Then, because it is Sunday, Donald tells Walter to come to the house on Monday, since bargains made on Sunday are not binding.

In this interesting passage the clergyman is the one who raises the issue of Donald's financial success being beneficial to the rest of the congregation. And Donald's success, achieved by adhering to the "rules," becomes, in this church service, linked to appearances. He has driven to church in the new family car, whose appearance reassures him of appearing successful. He and Clara *appear* to be the ideal couple. And his thoughts at the cemetery, where Aunt Annie is visiting the graves of Katie and Uncle Jim, begin with a consideration of the ephemeral quality of life, but turn almost immediately to the hope that his funeral will enhance the way he looked to others.

By the time that Donald enters the feverish race to become richer in the money market of 1929, he is very much aware of the way he appears to others, as a farmer, as a husband and father, as a citizen of the Alder Grove community. And he is competitive: his prize bull, Sundown Chieftain II, is a great source of pride to him; he wants his car to look newer and better than the cars of others on their way to church; he is pleased that his wife is one of the most attractive in the congregation. Donald derives satisfaction from living by the rules of his religion: no drinking, no business or entertainment on Sunday. In fact, he follows all rules, not just the rules of religion. His is an Old Testament God of retribution, not of grace or mercy. Donald has little sympathy for Mr. Farquhar or Walter Spence, who lack intelligence and business sense.

Contrasted with Donald's view of God as a being who deals out justice is Aunt Annie's God of grace. Annie listens to hymn sings on the radio and believes that Christians will literally "gather at the river," where sins are washed away. Annie's God of grace extends unmerited favour to sinners. And she is not so bound by rules as Donald is. Donald's daughter and her boyfriend begin dancing to radio music on a Sunday afternoon. Asked whether she thinks this is sinful, Annie replies, "I don't think it is sinful at all." ... "It is very beautiful. They are young. Oh, we are only young once, Donald" (MS One, 280). Immediately following this, Donald and his wife join the younger couple in dancing through the kitchen, dining room, and living room. This dance is the first sign of the limited reconciliation effected between Donald and Clara.

Donald's keen sense of competition and dependence on appearances may also have its roots in his friendship with Jimmie Wayne, who, from boyhood, was destined by his father for law school, since lawyers make more money than farmers. In the published Manuscript Three Donald and Jimmie talk about the high fees of lawyers, as opposed to the modest incomes of farmers, and young Donald considers Jimmie a very clever boy (Varma 32-33, a passage added to Manuscript Three). The news of his inheritance, which Donald receives at age 21, fuels in him a determination to be financially and socially as successful as Jimmie. Several passages from Manuscript One subtly enlarge this competition so that we can perceive Donald as a developing character throughout the novel.

MS One 97; Varma 62:

Not long after learning about his inheritance Donald, contemplating Jimmie Wayne's future as a lawyer, a future in which Jimmie will have a social status higher than that of a farmer, resolves that he, Donald, will show them. In ten years he will have a place of honour in his community and will have the world by the tail.

MS One 122-125; Varma 78:

Jimmie Wayne arrives for a Christmas visit, having finished law school, and talks about old days. He is no longer entirely sympathetic to the plight of the farmer.

MS One 176b; Varma 107

In the summer of 1929 Donald sits in his study calculating his wealth and remembering particular incidents of the past twenty-eight years, since he became engaged to Clara.

MS One 238; Varma 157:

Donald, though uneasy about investing in the stock market, feels the pull of easy money.

MS One 239-240; Varma 158:

Jimmie brags about how prestigious his firm is.

MS One 264-265; Varma 177:

Jimmie advises Donald to invest more, but Donald declines. Jimmie also tells him that if he should sell now, he would still be richer than when he began investing; Jimmie, however, advises against selling now (Sept. 1929).

These passages deleted from Manuscript One are important to our understanding of Donald. It is true that the rivalry between Donald and Jimmie is brought up several times in Manuscript Three, but that rivalry exists on more than one level. It is partly about money and prestige and partly the pursuit of Ellen Strand—Jimmie wins. So the references in Manuscipt One to Donald's determination to show the world that he can be rich and respected help to clarify Donald's otherwise puzzling passion for money.

If some of the deleted passages help to explain Donald's descent, others reinforce Donald's admirable qualities. That they are more extensive than the passages which develop Donald as a money lover is appropriate, since he is a sympathetic character, flawed though he may be. Because of these deleted passages which demonstrate Donald's integrity, his move toward regeneration in the final chapter of Manuscript One serves as a logical character development, and is not a surprise, as it is in Manuscript Three.

MS One 107-109; Varma 69:

At Tom and Katie's wedding reception Donald becomes angry with Harry Long, who is drinking. Outside the house he shakes Long like a rat and asks someone to take Long home. Long has, by drinking at the Strand house, broken a rule, and by admonishing Harry Long, Donald restores order within this community gathering.

MS One 220-224; Varma, 145:

Clara, her symphony radio programme interrupted by Auntie's talking, leaves the living room for her own room when Donald and Auntie listen to and participate in the hymn sing. Donald wonders whether Clara truly prefers symphony music or whether she is simply showing the family that her tastes are above theirs. Donald much prefers barn dance music to symphony music, and he loves hymns, even if the words do seem absurd sometimes. In this passage Donald is not obsessed with appearances, as he suspects Clara is.

MS One 248-251; Varma 166:

Ellen and Donald recall their childhood, remembering the visit to the cellar pantry. Ellen feels that her parents were very rich, and that her mother is still happy. They discuss Aunt Annie's still holding to her old faith.

MS One 266; Varma 178:

Donald contemplates the progress in harvest that has taken place in the two generations from Uncle Jim's youth to 1929. He thinks about the ways in which technical progress will eradicate hunger from the world in making enough food available. For once in this summer of 1929, Donald thinks about the rest of the world, and not about his own bank account.

MS One 267-284; Varma 178:

On a rainy Sunday in October 1929, just before the stock market crash, the family stay home from church. Donald wanders around his barn, thinking about the changes in what is considered proper behavior for Sunday. He enjoys greeting his livestock, and they seem to recognize him as well, and for a few moments material wealth becomes unimportant to Donald:

> To own a farm, to woo it from unbroken prairie into its present fruitfulness, to build barns, to breed cattle and horses, to protect them, to provide for their needs, to be to them as perhaps God is to man—what had all the world to offer that could compare with this? In such a mood he was utterly content; but the mood would not hold. An hour later he was in his office making calculations on a scrap of paper and wondering how the market would move on Monday. (MS One, 269)

In the afternoon Tom, Clarissa, and her boyfriend, Karl, arrive from town for a visit. Karl is a socialist, and is at first dismissed by Donald; but as Karl speaks with Donald in his office, Donald has a new admiration for this young man. Dinner is very pleasant; even Clara and Aunt Annie are on good terms with each other. Karl again presses his socialist doctrine, arguing that the State should provide medical care at least for women and children. Clara changes the subject and comments that marriage is based on contract. If a marriage fails, divorce should be available. The tension which has developed is broken when Clarissa and Karl begin to dance. Donald and Clara dance as well. A programme of hymns comes on the radio. They all listen, and then Donald and Clara talk briefly about the mystery of religious faith; they do not really know what it is. All agree that the evening has been very pleasant. It ends surprisingly for Donald when he goes in to say goodnight to Clara: for the first time in years she is willing to make love.

This particular deletion from the third manuscript is the only passage in Part

Three in which there is serenity in the entire household at Donald Strand's farm (Tom Strand has moved away from the farm). Donald's willingness to listen to Karl's views, Clara's and Aunt Annie's cordiality, and Donald's and Clara's lovemaking after years of celibacy depict a harmony which reinforces Donald's relative contentment in the final passage of the novel.

These, then, are some of the deletions from Manuscript One of *Dry Water.* Although Manuscript One does not wholly solve the problem of motivation for Donald Strand's development, it suggests more effectively than Manuscript Three some reasons for his adult materialism; and, unlike Manuscript Three, the first manuscript develops the Alder Creek community and the Strand family as social constructs whose values, community rooted and non-materialistic, stand in clear contrast to Donald's self interest and shrewd business tactics. Manuscript One's early passages, set in Donald's childhood, are, from the perspective of Parts Two and Three of the novel, the once-upon-a-time, the long ago of romance. Against these backgrounds, as they are seen in Manuscript One, Donald's disappointing marriage to an apparently glamorous woman and his determination to impress the world by growing rich, the two mirages in which he nearly drowns, are clearly perceptible. In short, then, the abundant romance elements of Manuscript One, against which materialistic values stand in sharp relief, are missing from Manuscript Three, the posthumously published manuscript. As a result, Manuscript Three lacks the richness of Manuscript One.

At the beginning of his writing career, Stead was apparently determined to write in the style of Ralph Connor, and he fostered the rather slim connection between

Connor's life and his own. So it appears that he made some attempt to emulate Connor's career. Like Connor, he set most of his romances, filled with adventure, in the Canadian West. But Stead's romances are not like Connor's. For one thing, they lack the wholesale appeal to emotions that characterized Connor fiction. For another, Stead's fiction lacks the didactic religious dimension of Connor's fiction. And rather than the preacher and the Mountie of Connor's fiction, the farmer is increasingly at the centre of Stead's books. If Connor's heroes are rough-and-tumble athletes, Stead's early heroes are articulate and literary. Raymond Burton quotes poetry; John Harris is a teacher; Dave Eldon studies philosophy; Cal Beach is a writer.

The passages more typical of realism than romance which have, from the beginning, distinguished Stead's romances from Connor's—prairie fires in *Dennison Grant* and *The Bail Jumper*, the cleaning of the granaries and Cal's handling of the horses in *The Smoking Flax*, Mary Harris's train ride to Manitoba, the selection of the Harris homestead, and the heavy demands of homesteading in *The Homesteaders*—these realistic passages seem to have indicated the direction of Stead's growth as a writer, for in his two final books, *Grain* and *Dry Water*, both realistic novels, romance, associated with an idyllic past or with fantasies, is subordinate to realism and functions ironically.

Other than the manuscripts of the books themselves, nothing in Robert Stead's papers indicates that he intentionally repeated the narrative pattern of his early romance *The Homesteaders* when he wrote the realistic novel *Dry Water*. The two books differ in tone: *The Homesteaders* is an action book, *Dry Water* meditative. Yet the remarkable similarity of the two books in setting, character, and plot invites comparison. These similarities, considered together with the books' significant differences, reveal the range of Stead's work, his development from the early romance fiction to his final, realistic novel.

Each book is set on a prosperous farm, originally a homestead, in Manitoba, John Harris's homestead near Plainville, and Donald Strand's farm near Alder Creek, and both books cover similar time spans (*The Homesteaders*, 1882-1907; *Dry Water*, 1880-1929). A chart of the plots, found on the following page, might make these two books easier to understand. The right and left columns are coordinated not by year, but by the common experiences of the two main characters.

The Homesteaders	*Dry Water*
	Part One: 1890 Donald, age 10, comes to live on Jim and Annie Strand's farm.
Prelude: 1891 John Harris and his fiancee Mary, decide to homestead in Manitoba. Chapters 1 to 5: 1892 John and Mary Harris travel to Manitoba, select a homestead, build a sod house, harvest first year's crop. Son Allan is born.	Part Two: 1901 Donald Strand inherits $6,000 from his parents, and buys a farm. He becomes engaged to Clara Wilson, the beautiful schoolteacher, breaking off his "understanding" with Hester Harp, a plain farm girl.
Chapters 6 to 20: 1907 John, middle aged and rich, becomes a victim of a real estate scam and loses most of his property. He renews his relationship with Mary and plans to begin farming again.	Part Three: 1929 Donald, middle aged and rich, loses most of his money after he invests it in the summer preceding the stock market crash. He renews his relationship with Clara and begins farming all over again.

Against these shared backgrounds Harris and Strand become wealthy middle aged farmers who, in their quest for more wealth, become spiritually impoverished. Only after financial loss has deprived the two men of much of this wealth, and after they recover their original non-materialistic values, do John Harris and Donald Strand reestablish family bonds and return to the land they farm.

Early in their married life in Manitoba, John and Mary Harris are an ideal couple, courageous, hardworking, and loving. John is devoted to Mary so much so that when he drives to town to market part of their first harvest, he determines to buy things that will make Mary happy, ignoring his own needs. Returning home through a blizzard, he refuses to stop at the home of friends until the storm abates, even though he has already lost his way a dozen times, but moves on to home and to Mary. And on the night that their first child is born, John Harris will allow no one to drive to town for the doctor but himself.

In these first chapters, then, John Harris, the ideal homesteader and husband, gives no hint of the greedy materialist he has become twenty-five years later, at the beginning of chapter six. But that is not unusual in romance, where the principle of cause and effect does not obtain. The account of Donald Strand's childhood, however, does indicate the direction of his adult values. Manuscript One presents a modicum of evidence that despite his ideal, non-materialist home with Aunt Annie and Uncle Jim Strand, Donald becomes increasingly aware of the power of money, through his conversations with Jimmie, with his cousins, and through Uncle Jim's implicit warning as he explains to Donald what a mirage ("dry water") is.

Part Two of *Dry Water*, which depicts that part of Donald's life which chapters one through five of *The Homesteaders* show of John Harris's life, purchasing his farm and becoming engaged, reveals with increased intensity Donald's materialism as well as Clara's. His thinking becomes quantitative, even to his appreciation of Clara's ankles on the day they meet: "But as he sat in the kitchen that night when Clara went up to her room he could not help appraising the trim ankles and a few inches of calf which a negligent skirt exposed on the stairs" (Varma, 71). Language is subtle here, for not only are *appraising* and *few inches* quantitative, but *calf* is later echoed in Donald's almost erotic feelings for his prize steer, Superchief II.

Curiously enough, a reversal of the image of wild strawberries links John and Mary Harris with Donald and Clara in the early days of each relationship. In *The Homesteaders* John and Mary Harris, recently married and in the process of settling in on their prairie homestead, take time off on Sundays from the week's work:

> On Sundays, when there was total relaxation from their regular labours, the two, arm in arm, would stroll along the bank of the ravine, or walk, ankle-deep in strawberry blossoms, far over the undulating plain to the west. Returning, they would find their way to the edge of the stream, where, in the shallow crossing, the suckers would dart in all directions in panic at their appearance. Here they would sit and listen to the gentle murmur of the water, while fleecy clouds mirrored themselves in its glassy depths, and plovers ran whistling up and down the bank, and a meadow-lark sent its limpid challenge from a neighbouring bush. And at night, when the moon rose in wonderful whiteness and purity, wrapping field and ravine in a riot of silver, the strange, irresistible, unanswerable longing of the great plains stole down upon them, and they knew that here indeed was life in its fulness—a participation in the Infinite, indefinable, but all-embracing, everlasting. (*The Homesteaders*, 65)

Of this prairie-as-garden passage, Harrison comments, "Stead gives the romance of pioneering in terms of the infinite, the eternal, and the ineffable; traditionally the terms and concerns of romance" (*Unnamed Country*, 75). And there is a prelapsarian quality to the Harris's walks through strawberry blossoms and their relationship with all they see and hear out-of-doors which compares ironically with the strawberry imagery in Clara Wilson's methodical pursuit of wealthy Donald Strand. For her, Nature is merely the backdrop of her hunt for a husband:

> She found a few berries, but most of her attention was upon him as he pursued his mile-long furrow to its southern end, turned his team and started again toward her. Her heart quickened its beat at his approach. What do you next? [sic] She had no course mapped out. Her one immediate purpose had been to see him; if possible, to talk with him. So far all had gone well. He had been reserved, but not cold; it was as much as she could have hoped. She must trust to her intuition guided by any mood he might disclose.
>
> He stopped again as he came alongside, and this time he got off his plow and came toward her. "Not very many," she said, holding his hat so he might see. She had put some leaves in it first and the few handfuls of berries were almost lost among them. He bent over the open hat. "It takes a great many of them to make a pound," he commented, "but they have a wonderful flavor. It's a strange thing about strawberries; most fruits are improved by cultivation, but nothing equals the wild strawberry for flavor."
>
> "Perhaps some things can be too tame," she suggested.
>
> He glanced at her quizzically, now frankly interested and amused.
>
> "And people?" he led her on.
>
> She placed a berry between her lips and turned her face tauntingly to his. "Perhaps." (89-90)

This passage is characterized by quantitative language as are most pre-nuptial passages about Donald and Clara. *Few, most, mile-long, quickened its beat, next, one, all, as much as, not very many, some, first, few, great many, pound, most, nothing,* and *some* all suggest the monetary nature of this pursuit. The idealism which informed the strawberry passage from *The Homesteaders* is now turned on its head. Donald and Clara are no Adam and Eve: Donald is plowing land he purchased by consciously impoverishing the Farquhars, and Clara plans her manhunt as though she were negotiating a corporate merger. Placing the berry between her teeth is not an innocent gesture, but a ruse in a game whose payoff is hard cash. Another irony is implicit in this scene. At the time she manipulates her engagement to Donald, the beginning of a disappointing marriage, Clara is the schoolteacher in Alder Creek. Since the earlier romances of Connor and McClung present the clergyman, the Mountie, and the schoolteacher as civilizing influences on homesteading communities in the Canadian West, schoolteacher Clara's pursuit of Donald, the prelude to a marriage which causes unhappiness to everyone living under the Strand roof, is a reversal of the earlier, romantic image of the schoolteacher. (Lest we feel sorry for Donald the victim of the pursuit, it is wise to remember that during the day when Clara proposes to him, Donald decides not to marry so that he can concentrate on becoming rich and on controlling grain prices in Alder Creek.)

In a larger sense, the narrative pattern of Part Two of *Dry Water* is an ironic echo of the pattern of Part One. Part One, especially as it appears in Manuscript One, completely in the mode of romance, begins with Donald's arrival at Jim and Annie Strand's farm and closes with a hailstorm, a disaster which simply draws together the already solid Strand family; they respond to the ruin of their fields by having tea together. Part Two also begins with Donald's introduction to a farm: his own, which he has bought by bankrupting Mr. Farquhar. At least seven marriageable young women of the community compete to become Mrs. Donald Strand. Part Two ends with Donald's and Clara's engagement, an event which is ideally a time for family celebration. Ironically, this marriage, which we do not actually observe until twenty-eight years later, is lacking in love. So the narrative pattern of the beginning and the ending of Part Two seems a reversal of the pattern of Part One, avarice controlling Donald's purchase of his new farm, the entire community of eligible females competing to become his wife, and outward beauty informing his imprudent choice of a wife.

Chapters six through twenty of *The Homesteaders* and Part Three of *Dry Water* present the clearest parallel in narrative pattern. Although the details differ, John and Donald, both rich men, both nearly fifty, lose most of their property in the very process of trying to acquire more. The dominant image of the mirage in both books reinforces the links in their narratives. Mary and John ride west in 1907 "in the charm and mirage of their young dream ..." (17). And chapter six, which begins the adventure romance in 1907, is entitled "In The Spell of the Mirage." The image of the mirage is central to *Dry Water*, of course. The words of the title are a phrase Uncle Jim uses to describe a mirage, which he explains to Donald at the end of romantic Part One.

In the final half of *The Homesteaders*, a fast-paced formulaic adventure with villains and a Mountie, the prospect of a large inheritance for young Beulah Harris, a gunfight in a remote mountain cabin, the near death of Allan Harris, and the loss of property and regaining of love for John and Mary, Stead does little to link this section of the book with the first half of the book. John Harris, who, twenty-five years earlier, was the devoted husband, eager to establish his homestead, but not avaricious, has become parsimonious and surly amid his wealth. The reader is unprepared for this, but in the popular romance tradition, especially after a lapse of twenty-five years, such a metamorphosis in what Frye calls the "and then" plot is not unreasonable.

Part Three of *Dry Water*, however, does not surprise the reader, for Donald's love of wealth and his interest in getting more are a logical extension of the young Donald in Part Two who disregarded the Farquhars' welfare in the interests of his own, Frye's "hence" plot. Parallels of romantic past with realistic present abound in *Dry Water,* the reality of Donald's household and community in tension with the romance of Uncle Jim's household and the Alder Creek community of thirty-nine years earlier. As in Part Two of the novel, the ironic link between romantic Part One and realistic Part Three is strengthened by the repetition of narrative patterns. At the beginning of Part One, Annie Strand awaited the arrival of her husband and Donald, and at the beginning of Part Three, Donald awaits the homecoming of his daughter, Clare, and his son Walter. Parts One and Three both end with loss: Uncle Jim, in Part One, loses his crop to a hailstorm, and Donald, in Part Three, loses much of his money. These broad similarities of the larger narrative patterns reinforce the ironic parallels Stead draws between present and past through his focus on the Sunday morning church service in the summer of 1929, contrasting with community and family life in Part One.

Alder Creek residents of 1890 observe Sundays very strictly. The church service depicted in Part One takes place shortly after Donald's arrival, and just after the blizzard. The entire community are present for the Sunday afternoon service, gathered in the schoolhouse, which Uncle Jim has warmed, since "it was his Christian duty to have the schoolroom in readiness" (*Dry Water,* 18). Tom Strand makes room in the Strand barn for the horses of fellow worshipers. Despite the extreme cold and the snow, community spirit blooms. The Sunday church service in the summer of 1929, on the other hand, is characterized by its spiritual deadness. As he drives to church in his new car, the smell of ripening wheat coming in through the car windows, Donald muses, "A new Earth had come in the last twenty years. 'And,' he added whimsically, to himself, 'the old Heaven has passed away'" (*Dry Water*, 132). This is borne out in the list of the congregation of that summer morning; that they are identified by profession as well as name reveals their earning power, and Donald and Clara perceive them as a self-serving lot:

> The morning congregation was thronging into church. Everyone knew Mr. and Mrs. Strand; everyone spoke in passing; some stopped to shake hands. Smate, the lawyer, unable to reach them, smiled his broadest assurance that all was well; Goad, the bank manager, had a good word about the crops; Lang, general merchant, remembered to congratulate the owner of Sundown Chieftain the Second, winner of first prize at Alder Creek fair; Lester, publisher of the local paper, had a nod for a good subscriber. Donald was in his element; he returned their greetings heartily, and was not afraid to crack a joke even on Sunday on the church steps. The women were more effusive and less sincere than the men; but Clara, though she saw through them like glass, played her part with just the right touch of dignity, reserve, and condescension. Though she could not shape her life to her liking she felt that she might as well have the sweet with the bitter, and the homage of these woman was sweet even while she knew that Mrs. Smate was under orders to be cordial because the lawyer was grooming himself for the party nomination, and that Mrs. Lang shared her husband's respect for a good customer. Clara had her smile and her soft word for each of them. Even that wizened little bachelor, Harry Long, who, despite innumerable rejections, still believed himself to have a way with the women, purred audibly when she spoke to him by name and took it as a good omen for the renewal of the fire insurance policy which he carried on the Strand buildings. (*Dry Water*, 134-135)

And if the congregation are materialistic, Donald, who hands his daughter twenty dollars just before the service, is just as materialistic as they. He considers the pre-sermon collections a "pay-in-advance system" and disapproves of the dedicatory prayer at the end of the collection: "it was too artful a means of impressing upon the congregation that they were giving to the Lord, meaning, in this instance, the minister's stipend, the janitor's wages, and the mortgage on the building" (*Dry Water*, 135-146).

Money concerns continue to preoccupy Donald's mind during the sermon, as he considers his financial worth, $75,838.40, the forty cents ironically echoing the amount of the collection of the long ago 1890 church service, when Uncle Jim's hat served as the collection plate. The capstone of this financially oriented church service is found in a passage deleted from Manuscript Three, in which the minister speaks briefly with Donald after the service:

> Mr. Munro shook hands all around, and the conversation swung, not to the subject of his sermon, but to the weather and the crops. But he managed a word in Donald's ear: "It's a great comfort to me, Mr. Strand, to see you always in your pew. The most successful farmer—it's a fine influence, a fine influence. You've no idea how it helps."
>
> Donald was pleased with the recognition of his success, and he knew that Mr. Munro was much too discreet to embarrass him with any more pointed application. "The church is a great institution," he managed. "I'm always glad to support it—with both time and money." He would have liked to recall something from the sermon, just as a return compliment, but nothing came at the moment, and the minister moved on to mingle with others of his congregation. (MS One, 210)

Mr. Munro's comment to Donald is a reversal of the remark made to young Donald in 1890 by the minister, Mr. McKenzie: "'And you're the new boy I've been hearing about, Donald.' The minister was looking straight at him with blue eyes that invited confidence. 'I saw you at the service, my lad, and good attention you paid, too. Always go to the service, my boy. It's a good way to begin life—and a good way to finish it'" (MS One, 33-34. In MS Three, the word *finish* is changed to *end*).

But if the church service in Part Three illuminates reversals in Donald and his community, the remainder of that same Sunday reveals as well Donald's integrity and genuine affection for his family. Deleted from Manuscript Three, but found in Manuscript One, is Donald's and Aunt Annie's visit to the cemetery after the church service, to the graves of Uncle Jim and Katie Crisp Strand. Here Donald is again reminded of the people and the values of the past; and the incident serves as a transition to a radio program of old hymns to which he and Aunt Annie listen on this Sunday evening, in a section included in Manuscript One, but absent from Manuscript Three. If the morning church service strengthens Donald's sense of his wealth, the evening hymn sing reawakens in him Aunt Annie's—and his—religion of grace.

> As the hour wore on he was more and more stirred by a deep emotional experience. It was something he accepted without argument; it was a flood which poured about him and refreshed and cleansed him. At such moments he had glimpses that perhaps religion itself was something to be accepted without argument; that religion which could be proved by any process of logic would not be religion at all. (MS One, 222)

This Sunday in Part Three, then, yields two views of Donald, the man of money and the man of belief, each a part of Donald. Each view harkens back to the idealism of Part One, the man of money a reversal of the spiritual values of the 1890 congregation, the man of belief a reflection of those earlier values. But the focus of this Sunday is not only on Donald; it is on the community of Alder Creek, who are also an ironic contrast to their 1890 forbears. The earlier community were able to work together for such goals as the annual picnic (MS One, 60-64, deleted from MS Three) or Tom Strand and Katie Crisp's wedding (MS One, 103-109; deleted from MS Three). Materialistic, they are present at the Sunday church service as a kind of public relations ploy. God does not figure significantly in this gathering.

A Strand family gathering on another Sunday in Part Three of *Dry Water* reveals much that is positive about Donald; in fact, the conversations of this afternoon and evening illuminate all the characters present. Unfortunately, however, these seventeen pages exist only in Manuscript One (267-284). Prem Varma provides the following note regarding this lengthy deletion: "Two sections preceding this one [the point of deletion] in earlier versions, cut in the final one, observance of the Sabbath, Clara's ideas on divorce, and introduction to Karl (Clarissa's boyfriend) and his ideas on various subjects, etc." (Varma, 243). Her comment is not only puzzling, but inadequate. The distinction of this passage is that it is the one occasion in the entire novel when all of Donald's family are together in one place, conversing amicably. It is set on a rainy Sunday, the third Sunday of October 1929, a day whose muddy roads make driving to church inadvisable, Donald decides.

Donald's thoughts early on this day reveal a man who loves farming as much as he loves money, something Stead does not allow the reader to forget:

> He arose at six, allowing himself an extra hour in recognition of the day of rest, and puttered about the barn while George and Ned did the milking and the morning chores. The comfort of the barn on a wet or wintry day always stirred nostalgic reactions within him. It carried him back to the intense peace which as a little boy he had sometimes found in the sod stable on his uncle's farm. The cattle and horses were good company; they recognized him with much tossing and nodding of their heads. The cows would stretch prodigious tongues at him as he passed by, the horses curled their upper lips and stamped affectionately. There was something in their friendship which soothed his mind from the gnawing suspicion which still ached within it when he had time to think, and which blurred his new picture of success ... . In such a mood he was utterly content; but the mood would not hold. An hour later he was in his office making calculations on a scrap of paper and wondering how the market would move on Monday. (MS One, 268-269)

The passage yields a balanced view of Donald, as does the narrative of the 1929 church service and Donald's subsequent listening to the radio with Aunt Annie. Donald is by no means perfect, nor is he wholly materialistic.

The Stead papers do not contain references to Frederick Philip Grove, yet the influence of Grove's fiction on *Dry Water* seems unmistakable. *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925) was published ten years before Stead produced the first manuscript of *Dry Water*. It would be inaccurate to say that the two books are parallel; but there are, in the two books, to be sure, some parallel narrative patterns. The woman Neils Lindstedt loves is Ellen Amundsen; the woman he marries is Clara Vogel. These names, identical with Ellen Strand, whom Donald loves, and Clara Wilson, whom he marries, seem hardly coincidental. Stead's choice of female names reinforces the parallel narratives.

Both Ellens refuse to marry the men who love them. Ellen Strand is afraid to marry her cousin Donald, who loves her and whom she loves, for fear their kinship will adversely affect the children of such a marriage. (Ironically, she and her husband, Jimmie Wayne, have no children.) Mrs. Amundsen, Ellen's mother, who has been sexually brutalized by her husband, exacts a promise from her daughter that the young woman will never marry. Consequently, Donald Strand and Neils Lindstedt, each refused by a woman named Ellen, begin looking elsewhere for wives. The two young men—by this time, each is a well-to-do farmer—are each seduced by a woman named Clara, neither Clara loving the man she ensnares. After her marriage, Clara Vogel continues to make trips to the city, where she earns money as a prostitute. Although Clara Wilson Strand appears to be the model wife for nearly thirty years, she eventually tells her husband that she wants to go to Winnipeg occasionally to see Jimmie Wayne, her intended lover. Each of the chilly Claras keeps to her own room.

Not only are women's names and some plot elements similar in *Dry Water* and *Settlers of the Marsh*, but each book contains romantic and realistic elements.

Neils, who approaches his marriage naively, is forced to see realistically when he learns that he has married the district whore. The realism in *Dry Water* is developed in a different way, as Donald and the members of his community measure out their lives in money. In each book the romantic past provides a contrast to the realistic present.

Grove's *Fruits of the Earth,* published in 1933, two years before Stead finished *Dry Water,* may have influenced Stead as well in the writing of his final book. Although Donald Strand, an obviously flawed human being, does not have the godlike stature of Abe Spalding, some of the the narrative patterns of *Dry Water* recall the patterns of *Fruits of the Earth.* Abe and Donald are both meditative men. Abe runs for public office and loses, while Donald's plans to run for office are interrupted by the stock market crash. Like Abe, Donald becomes alienated from his wife; and two of his three children leave the farm. For a while, each is the wealthiest man in his community, and each loses much of his fortune. Like Abe Spalding, Donald Strand eventually returns to the soil, cultivating the land with a horse-drawn plow.

Since the only clues that Stead has left us about the influences on his writing are his references to Ralph Connor, it is in his fiction itself that we may have to find echoes of other influences. If *Dry Water* reflects on the one hand one of Stead's own early romances, and on the other, fiction by prairie realist Grove, this reflection may suggest avenues for further research.

Although some of Stead's essays and short stories are undated, an examination of his papers suggests that apart from twice shortening the 1935 manuscript of *Dry Water,* he produced very little in the twenty-four years from 1935 to his death in 1959. The lack of further Stead fiction is unfortunate, since with *Grain* and *Dry Water,* Stead became a developed novelist. His irony in the contrast of romance and realism in his later books is suggested, even in his earliest fiction. The implicit realism of the journey west in *The Homesteaders* puts into perspective the romance of the book; likewise, in Jo Burge's perception of war as a heroic enterprise, Stead places romance in ironic contrast with the realism which informs most of the novel. His ability, from the beginnings of his fiction writing, to link the structure and the content of his art through the ironic contrast of romance and realism suggest a distance and self-consciousness about his fiction which is absent from the fiction of Ralph Connor.

Finally, in Manuscript One of *Dry Water,* Stead combines romance and realism in a narrative whose design is the most ambitious and most balanced of all his fiction, counterpoising the romance of Donald Strand's childhood with the realistic materialism of his adult years. The community of Alder Creek in 1890 (Part One) is contrasted with the same community in 1901 (Part Two) and in 1929 (Part Three). The money-minded Sunday congregation in August 1929 are a far cry from those worshipers who gather in the schoolhouse in January 1890. Donald's school teacher in 1890 is concerned with the students' moral development; Clara Wilson, school teacher in 1901, lacks interest in any kind of development in her students: she is hunting a rich husband. Family harmony in Jim and Annie Strand's home in 1890 provides motivation for the work of running a farm. By 1929, Donald and Clara Strand's family, with the same number of children as were born to Jim and Annie, are dysfunctional. Donald works hard to succeed as a farmer in order to be the wealthiest man in the community, and Clara loves only the social position her husband's money assures her. And although Donald has begun to recover some of his childhood values by the close of the novel, the final two words, "gathering darkness," like the final words of *Grain,* "muddy road," suggest the ambivalence which is more typical of realism than romance and thus combine romance and realism.

Stead has not left any record of how he felt when his twice rejected novel was finally denied the honor which had seemed so close. One can only infer from Stead's letter to Lorne Pierce, June 11, 1949, the extent of his disappointment:

> I am just back from western Canada, where I renewed association with the prairies and the foothills, and met ranchers and farmers who have made a great deal more money than there is for the average craftsman in poetry or fiction. Fame? It multiplies responsibilities without any increase in groceries. (Lorne Pierce papers, Box XVI)

A between-the-lines-reading of this letter, the last reference to *Dry Water* to be found among his papers or among Pierce's, suggests the depth of Stead's anger that his best book was not to reach the public.

But even though *Dry Water* was finally published in 1983, the original manuscript, in which "there is not a sentence ... which was not put there for a purpose," has yet to be published. Only when that manuscript, Manuscript One, is available in print will Robert Stead's fiction have received the treatment it should have had in the first place.

Conclusion

In her seminal article, "Best Sellers in English Canada, 1899-1918," Mary Vipond speaks of the importance of popular fiction of earlier times to historians and to literary critics. Modern historians gain from these early books "revelation of the ideas and attitudes of another time" (96); literary critics gain wider understanding of a developing Canadian literature. Referring to Vipond's article, Elizabeth Waterston writes,

> The word 'popular' is often used pejoratively, and we may speak slightingly of a book that is 'merely popular.' But popularity, it seems, is 'not so mere anymore.' ... Piously reading these old books as social historians or as literary critics, however, we suddenly realize with a blush of self-awareness that we turn the pages with quickened interest not because they prove something about evolution or illustrate national motifs. We read the best sellers of the past basically because they give us the same pleasures they gave their thousands of readers when they first came out: they satisfy our basic need for vicarious experience; they lessen tension and anxiety; and they offer a pathway through the wilderness of human needs, fears, and desires. (445-46)

Waterston's use of the pronouns *we* and *our* is probably too generalized; it is unlikely that she speaks for all modern readers. But she does speak for me. Often, in the preparation of this thesis, I have opened Connor's *The Sky Pilot* or *The Man From Glengarry,* intending to locate a particular passage, only to discover an hour later that I have read continuously for fifty pages or so. And that hour's reading has not been motivated solely by academic interests; Connor is an engaging writer, and he knows how to tell a story.

The popularity of Connor's fiction with his contemporary audience is not difficult to understand; as popular fiction is said to do, his romances articulate and reaffirm their cultural values. His protagonists' allegiance to the Dominion, love of home and family, and commitment to sobriety and the work ethic must have appealed to his audience. Connor's didacticism comes from his belief in what he wrote; the *Black Rock* sketches were submitted at the request of the editor of *The Westminster* so that readers, particularly in eastern Canada, might know of the work of the church in frontier work camps in the West. And his letters written before the First World War do not give evidence of his being interested in reviews or sales of his books. Only after his return from the war, when Connor discovered that he was in debt, did he begin to write out of financial need; and it is then that he became a more self-conscious, and less effective, writer.

The continuing appeal of Connor's fiction also lies partly in its affirmation of eternal patterns. All social order, whether civil or domestic, grows out of a moral order which, for Connor, is his solid Presbyterian commitment. The regenerative power of this religious belief is extended, on a social level, to the regenerative power of the Canadian West to create order in human lives and is implicit in such cyclical imagery as sunrises and sunsets, well tended flower gardens, the abundance of growth in Gwen's canyon, and the restored order of Jack French's grain fields. Robert Stead also envisions a moral order which effects positive development in the lives of his fictional characters. But for Stead this timeless moral order derives not from a religious faith, but from a commitment to home and family and a rejection of materialism. The birth of John and Mary Harris's first child; the later movement west of the Harris children; the positive effect of children on the lives of adult characters in Stead's other romances; and the yearly planting, nurturing, and harvesting of crops reflect timeless cyclical patterns. These values, which are not linked to any one historical period, contribute to the appeal of his early romances, despite their simplistic qualities.

It is perhaps Stead's self-consciousness as a writer which helped him to develop his fiction from what Logan and French term the popular romances of the "Connorites," and into the realistic fiction for which he is best known. From the beginning of his career, his papers indicate, he envisioned himself primarily as a writer, although he wrote in the evenings, after a day's work as a newspaperman or a civil servant. He was always concerned with the placement of reviews and with the sales of his books. His strength as a writer of realistic fiction seems to have grown as he worked to become well known as a writer. And it is interesting that in his development as a writer, Stead did not abandon the romance of his early books. At first, he included realistic passages in his romances. By the time he published *Grain* and wrote *Dry Water,* he had emerged as an author of realistic fiction into which he incorporated elements of romance.

As well, the sort of fiction which Stead wrote in his two final books, in which romance is combined with another form of fiction, is also evident in more challenging forms of western Canadian fiction written more recently. The romantic treatment of Brian's prairie environment in the early childhood sections of W. O. Mitchell's early novel, *Who Has Seen the Wind,* contrasts ironically with the boy's later perceptions of a frightening prairie which contributes to madness or has the scent of death and decay. In Mitchell's *The Vanishing Point,* the romantic notion of nature, here represented by the Native "Storm and Misty," is set in tension with realist views of the social practicalities of their lives. Carlyle is aware of the balance he must maintain between a romantic return to nature and the realities of twentieth century life in an industrialized world.

In the later prairie fiction, the romantic image of the garden appears ironically to suggest the lost Edens of the early romances of pioneering. The quest patterns of romance appear in the fiction of Robert Kroetsch as an ironic invocation of an Edenic world. Jeremy Bentham Sadness, in *Gone Indian,* romantically pursues the Columbus quest. Hazard Lepage, in *The Studhorse Man,* embarks on a quest for a brood mare for his stallion with the godlike name of Poseidon, only to be eventually kicked to death by the horse. A further reversal of the Edenic vision lies in the fact that urine from the mares whom Poseidon eventually impregnates is used to produce birth control medication, which negates fertility. The persistence of romance in prairie literature, however ironic, testifies to the appropriateness of this garden imagery. Something in the prairie experience is best represented as a longing for Eden or as a reversal of Eden. The innocence of Connor's romances is clearly out of touch with a modern world, as are the early romances of Stead. The ideals which they present in their fiction, however, are the ideals which readers of any historical period long for: goodness prevailing over evil, human love which is permanent and capable of self-sacrifice, and prosperity which comes as a result of honesty, hard work, and commitment to family.

Ralph Connor's romances spellbound readers early in this century. Examining the work can show us its kinship with romances of several centuries, as well as something about the ideals of the society that so admired him. Robert Stead's fiction is another matter. True, his early books are romances, as Connor's books are romances. But, unlike Connor, Stead developed eventually as a realistic novelist, and even his earliest romances indicate the direction in which Stead was eventually to develop. His early books, then, deserve re-evaluation not only as the romances which they are, but as work which is a part of the process of their author's development. Especially in need of critical attention is *Dry Water.* The choice of the wrong manuscript for editing was an enormous disservice to Stead, and it unfortunately repeated the earlier errors of critics who incorrectly categorized Stead's work. Clearly, this novel should be re-edited—and carefully proofread the second time around. The relationship between realism and romance in the development and flowering of Stead's fiction is well worth examination. Such a re-examination will enrich Canadian literature and Canadian literary criticism.

Notes

Chapter Two: The Western Fiction of Ralph Connor

[1] With the exception of John Lennox, critics of Connor's work consistently refer to this writer as "Ralph Connor," whether they are speaking of the fiction or of the life of its author, the Reverend Charles W. Gordon. I shall do the same, referring to him as "Ralph Connor."

[2] I was privileged to be among the first who examined the papers of Ralph Connor (Charles Gordon) in 1989, shortly after they were acquired by the University of Manitoba Archives Eight photographs from this collection may be found in Appendix A.

Chapter Three: From Romance to Realism: The Fiction of Robert Stead

[1] Through the kind permission of the family of Robert J. C. Stead, I was allowed to examine the papers of Robert Stead, housed in the National Archives of Canada, in Ottawa.

[2] In 1924 Lorne A. Pierce wrote to Stead, asking him to write a biography of Charles W. Gordon (Ralph Connor) for *The Makers of Canadian Literature*, to be published by The Ryerson Press. The book was never published. A typescript of pages 1-16, which are biographical, and pages 89-133, which are part of a critical assessment of Connor's fiction, are in the Stead Papers in the National Archives of Canada, Vol 5, File 5-2.

Chapter Four: *Dry Water:* Stead's Posthumously Published Novel

[1] Since 1983, when *Dry Water,* edited by Prem Varma, was published, the Robert J. C. Stead Papers have been reorganized. Hence, my references to the Stead Papers will reflect this changed organization. As well, the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, are now known as the National Archives of Canada, the name change having taken place in the Spring of 1989.

[2] In her introduction to *Dry Water* Varma notes that this document is not dated. But Paul Banfield, Assistant Archivist with the Queens University Archives, Kingston, Ontario, who helpfully located the document for me, pointed out that it is dated 14 October 1947.

[3] I could not find the Ryerson Press letter informing Stead of his winning the book award nor the subsequent letter withdrawing the award in the Stead papers at the National Archives of Canada or in the Lorne Pierce papers at Queens University. So I wrote to Prem Varma in July 1992, asking her if she might be able to tell me where these two letters are located. She has not replied to my inquiry. Critic Eric Thompson apparently had a similar experience, although he makes no mention of querying Varma about the location of the two missing letters. His citation for these letters, like mine, is Varma's "Introduction" to *Dry Water* (Thompson, 270).

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APPENDIX A

Included here are eight photographs from the Charles W. Gordon papers, University of Manitoba Archives, Photograph Collection (PC) 76. The two numbers which follow number 76 in each item below are the folder number and the photograph number.

Page 215: This blue-coloured photograph was taken during Charles Gordon's missionary days in western Alberta. It is a view looking "N.E. from Church—Camptown," possibly near Canmore, Alberta. No date. (76-3-5)

Page 216: Another blue-coloured photograph of five men posed in front of the "Synod of Nor-West Missions. James Robertson is on the far right, Charles Gordon in the middle." No date. (76-3-7)

Photographs 3, 4, 5, and 6 are promotional photos for what appear to be two separate filmings of *The Sky Pilot.*

Page 217: "Gwen hears of Bill's Bluff." No date. (76-4-7)

Page 218: "Bill opens the new Church." No date. (76-4-6)

Page 219: "He held church in the bar-room." 1921-22. (76-6-7)

Page 220: "Daydreams of love—when she got well." 1921-22. (76-6-12)

Page 221: Photograph of Gordon and Golch's Bookstall, Princes Bridge, Melbourne, Australia. Posters on the bookstand advertise Ralph Connor's book *Corporal Cameron.* (76-8-1)

Page 222: Charles Gordon and his dog, inside his home. No date. (76-1-10)

Pages 215 to 222, inclusive, have been removed because of poor print quality.

APPENDIX B

Listed below are summaries of passages which were in Manuscript One (1935), the manuscript Stead told Robert McClelland he wanted to stay exactly as it was, but deleted from Manuscript Three, the manuscript on which the published novel, edited by Prem Varma, is based. This is not a complete listing of deletions, but only those of at least one full sentence or more. The page numbers refer to Manuscript One. (A complete list of deletions is found in Varma's notes at the end of *Dry Water.*)

This listing does not include passages which Stead added to Manuscripts Two and Three. Nor does it include sentences which Stead altered in Manuscript Three, whose meaning remains the same.

Book One

1-3	Stead completely rewrote the first two and one-half pages of Manuscript One. In the first manuscript, the people are described boarding the train, claiming seats. Mrs. Burrow's last minute conversation with Donald and her conversation with the conductor are indirectly reported in Manuscript Three. The conductor's conversation with Donald is direct in Manuscipt One, indirect in Manuscript Three. In Manuscript One Donald cries a little as he thinks about the death of his parents. This is replaced, in Manuscript Three, with his watching the vast, snow-covered prairie.
3	Donald watches the conductor swing back onto the train, and almost decides to be a railwayman when he grows up.
3-4	The station agent tells Donald that he will look after the boy until his uncle arrives; the agent jokes with him a bit and asks his wife to give Donald

some supper.

6 Donald, riding in the sleigh beside Uncle Jim, admires the kindness and generosity of his uncle.

7 Pleasantly warm, Donald is happy as he rides along in the sleigh.

16-18 Donald and Ellen go down to the food pantry, where are stored root vegetables, preserves, milk with cream rising, butter, cheese, and a barrel of apples, which Donald leans into in order to smell the apples. Donald and Ellen affirm their friendship and imagine living in this food storage room, where "no one could ever find us."

18-19 Uncle Jim and Tom speak pleasantly with Donald; Hector the dog seems bent on deepening this new friendship; Aunt Annie calls them to dinner.

19-25 Here is cut a long passage which begins with the mid-day meal at the Strands, and ends as Donald has just gone to bed. The meal is amply satisfying. After dinner Donald and Tom go out to explore the stable, only after Aunt Annie dresses Donald for the storm, which is still raging. Hand in hand the boys make their way through the storm to the stable, where Uncle Jim and Tom do chores while Donald watches. Then he is allowed to help. Uncle Jim promises to teach Donald to ride a pony. Then they inspect the pigs and return to the house. Lizzie helps Ellen and Donald with their lessons. Tom and Donald play checkers. Uncle Jim goes to Tom's room, where, covered with "two heavy patch-work quilts," he snickers happily while reading a book by Captain Marryat, then falls asleep. Later, after supper, milking cows, and evening prayers, Donald goes to bed. In bed, Donald thinks of his new family and his growing respect for Uncle Jim and Tom, his affection for Ellen, wishing his parents could be here to know these people, too. He wonders if his parents' death was the will of God. Though the storm makes the house tremble, Donald is not afraid.

27-29 Uncle Jim reprimands Donald for reading the newspaper on Sunday. Donald, devastated, is comforted by Ellen, who says she sometimes reads the paper on Sunday because there is nothing about newspapers in the Bible.

29 Uncle Jim, despite Aunt Annie's protest, will go through the cold weather to church.

35 "So, for the moment, the issue [reading newspapers on Sunday] rested, but Donald and Ellen felt like comrades-in-arms who had fought, at least, a drawn battle."

35-37 Walter visits. The family have a hymn sing. Walter spends the night. When the weather warms up, Donald is given a few chores so that he is a part of the family activity.

38-39 In Manuscript Three Stead added a paragraph in which Ellen raises her hands above her head in a characteristic gesture at high moments.

40-48 A long section is deleted in which Donald is punished for fighting with Freddie Mergle, defending Ellen's honour, and for swearing. The Strand family support Donald, and friendships at school are strengthened. Donald fears for his soul because of his swearing. Mr. Matthews, the teacher, reassures him.

51 A Section is inserted in Manuscript Three in which Donald and Jimmie Wayne discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being a farmer and being a lawyer.

53-65	A long section is cut. Donald helps with vegetable gardening and with the soapmaking. Ellen, Lizzie, and Donald chat about the money made by doctors and lawyers. Walter Spence "happens" by at supper time. They talk of the new grain elevator. Tom, Donald, and Walter go to shoot cranes. They stay all night at Walter's cabin. Donald says his prayers, but Tom does not. Donald worries about his soul. The summer picnic at Sundown School is the "community event of the year." A long paragraph is devoted to the food arrangements. Saplings are cut for shade, and benches set up inside the "bower." A baseball game and tug of war are planned. A long paragraph details the arrival of the settlers, their clothing, and their means of transport. At the picnic women nurse and change babies. Men talk about weather and crops. At the baseball game, Donald and Freddie Mergle have a run-in. Freddie backs off when Jimmie comes to Donald's defense. Hester is too close to Donald for Ellen's comfort, and Ellen objects. The day is marred for Donald.
67	This short passage describes Hector the dog helping Donald herd the cows.
68	Donald and Hector play while keeping an eye on the cows.
68-71	Donald ponders being a farmer or a locomotive engineer, falls asleep, and awakes to find cows have wandered. Hector saves the day. Donald kills a gopher, then shares his lunch with Hector.
72-73	Donald is allowed to go to Alder Creek with Uncle Jim because he needs boots.
76-77	Donald and Uncle Jim visit the new grain elevator. Donald has a snack of cookies and milk, since Uncle Jim realizes he is hungry.

80 This paragraph about the arrival home is expanded in Manuscript Three to include direct conversation.

Book Two (In Manuscripts Two and Three, called Part Two)

87-88 Ellen and Donald note that Donald has begun to swear.

97 Donald contemplates Jimmie Wayne's future as a lawyer, a future in which Jimmie will have a social status higher than that of a farmer, and resolves that he, Donald, will show them. In ten years he will have a place of honour in his community and will have the world by the tail.

102-109 A long section is cut in which Mr. and Mrs. Strand move into a little cottage which Mrs. Strand at first does not like. Tom Strand and Katie Crisp are married. The wedding reception, a huge community affair, includes everyone, from those still dressed up from the wedding to threshers on their way home from work. There is circle dancing, square dancing. All the food is brought in by members of the community. Donald gets into a fight with Harry Long, who is drinking.

110 Donald ploughs his new farm in October.

111 Donald, thinking about religion, wonders if the ghost of his father is present in the field where he is ploughing, watching his son.

116 Mrs. Farquhar is angry that salesmen, trained to take advantage of the weaker sort, take advantage of people like her husband.

119-122 This section about Donald's going ten miles for wood several times each week is consolidated to less than one page in Manuscript Three. It includes a passage in which Ellen prepares Donald's breakfast and they part

	affectionately.
122-125	Jimmie Wayne, having finished law school, arrives and talks about old days. He is no longer entirely sympathetic to the plight of the farmer. This is consolidated in subsequent manuscripts into a short section in which Jimmie arrives, but talks little of the plight of the farmer.
127-8	Donald kneels to say his prayers, even though Jimmie does not. They talk of their images of God.
128-139	Donald spends Christmas with Mr. and Mrs. Strand. He gives expensive gifts to his relatives, pleased that he can afford them. Walter and Lizzie are having troubles. There is a New Year's Eve dance at Tom and Katie's house. Since Jimmie is taking Ellen, Donald takes Hester Harp. Then Clara arrives back early in order to go to the party. Donald wants to take her, but can't. She arrives with Harry Long, the man Donald had beaten up at Tom and Katie's reception. Donald has fun in spite of Clara and Harry.
144-5	Clara, deciding to work on Donald (it is now spring), sees marriage to him as an escape from teaching and from the burdensome Harry Long.
145-6	Before she leaves to waylay Donald, Clara, in language that includes ***default, bonds, interest, principal, speculation, steel,*** thinks of what she could make of Donald and how Hester is the wrong mate for him.
147	Clara does not correctly judge the speed of Donald's approaching horses, and has to jump out of the way to avoid them.
153-4	Clara sets a charming table for Donald.
154-6	Clara, apologizing to Donald for her behavior over the last few months, manipulates him into concentrating on her.

161	In two short sections Donald cannot say his prayers. He determines to break with Hester the next evening and then to call at Tom's, where Clara is boarding.
163-7	Donald breaks off his relationship with Hester.

Book Three

176b	Donald's son Tom pleads to leave the farm and go to work in the bank.
176b-c	There is a close moment between Donald and grateful son Tom.
178-9	For one full page Donald contemplates the validity of Aunt Annie's religious doctrines, the nature of death, and the possibility of after life. He decides to think about it "when the business of life was less pressing."
183-4	Donald bids an affectionate goodnight to Aunt Annie, who plans to go to church with the family the next day. Clearly, she wishes for death in order to be with Uncle Jim.
186	Clara's room commands a view of the site of the old Sundown School.
188	Donald is disappointed that his children live away from home—"another evidence that the family tie was breaking"—and Clara is unimpressed when Donald's bull wins first prize.
189	Donald remembers the night of Tom's birth and cannot bear to think of his family divided.
193	Donald, with the hired man, inspects production charts and machinery for the farm.
195	Donald's hired man says that he, like horses, knows how to use Sundays for relaxation, and Donald answers that the hired man is not quite human.

201 Aunt Annie declines the trip to Winnipeg because she feels uncomfortable with Clara.

202 The evidence of the old road is now blurred by fields and new roads.

202 The old Calder farm, owned by another family, has undergone change.

204 Clare and Walter, Donald and Clara's daughter and son, discuss whether people are happy. Aunt Annie says she is happy.

204 Donald suggests that Clare's boyfriend is an anarchist.

209-214 After church the minister tells Donald how the presence of a successful farmer is a "fine influence" on the congregation; Donald takes Aunt Annie to the cemetery for a visit while Clara visits Tom at his boarding house; Donald meets Karl, Clare's beau; Walter Spence asks for a loan, and Donald offers to buy his stock instead, a move which is actually less risky for Walter. The agreement is verbal. Donald tells Walter to come to the house on Monday so that there is no official business carried out on Sunday.

214-5 Donald thinks about Lizzie Spence's grievances.

217 Donald remembers the day Ellen helped him with the cows years ago.

220-24 Clara, her radio programme (symphony) interrupted by Auntie's talk, leaves the living room when Donald and Auntie listen to and participate in the hymn sing.

225 This page is not cut, but revised in later manuscripts, which have a bantering, even humorous conversation between Donald and Clara about that outrageous driving Donald has been doing in Winnipeg.

232 Jimmie thinks that it's all right to drink, in moderation.

235 Jimmie states his belief that marriage doesn't make any biological sense

	and that, consequently, divorce does.
237-238	In two short passages Donald remembers Ellen's care and attention during their childhood.
238	Donald, though uneasy about investing in the stock market, feels the pull of easy money.
239-40	Jimmie brags about how prestigious his firm is.
245-247	A clever salesman tries to sell Donald a combine. Donald declines. Cf. Mr. Farquhar.
257-8	Donald does not tell Clara of his $5,000 investment, nor does he tell her that Jimmie suggested he run for Parliament.
260-61	Donald wonders if Clara is considering having an affair with Jimmie. He is appalled that either Clara or Jimmie could think of this.
264-5	Donald remains watchful of Clara, but Clara's behavior is impeccable. Jimmie advises Donald to invest more, but Donald declines. Jimmie also tells him that if he should sell now, he would still be richer than when he began investing; Jimmie, however, advises against selling now (Sept. 1929). This passage is replaced in Manuscript Three by a short paragraph which states that Donald watched Clara, but that her behavior was above reproach, even softer.
266	Donald contemplates the progress in harvests that have taken place in the two generations from Uncle Jim's youth to 1929. He thinks about the ways in which this technical progress will eradicate hunger from the world by making enough food available.
267-284	A very long section cut. Donald thinks about changes, both social and

technological. Karl, Clare's boyfriend, arrives for dinner. He is a socialist, at first dismissed by Donald. But as Karl speaks with Donald in his office, Donald has a new admiration for this young man. Dinner is very pleasant. Even Clara and Aunt Annie are on good terms with each other. Karl again presses his Socialist doctrine, arguing that the State should provide medical care at least for women and children. Clara adds that marriage is based on contract. If it fails, divorce should be available. Tension, which has developed, is broken when Clare and Karl begin to dance. Donald and Clara dance as well. They listen to a programme of hymns on the radio, then talk briefly about the mystery of religious faith, which they do not understand. All agree that it has been a very pleasant evening. The evening ends most surprisingly for Donald when he goes in to say goodnight to Clara. For the first time in years she is willing to make love.

285 A letter from Jimmie tells of a minor slump in the stock market. Donald tries not to worry.

323-326 Ellen, who has just arrived in Alder Creek to live in a small cottage with her mother, is comforted by Clare. She meets young Tom Strand and Clare's boyfriend, Karl. Dinner is strained. Lizzie and Walter call, and Lizzie is angry that Donald holds the title to Jim Strand's farm in return for taking care of Aunt Annie. Lizzie feels that the farm should have come to her. Walter tells Donald that he can't pay back the loan, and Donald offers to buy Walter's farm and to have Walter stay on the farm as a tenant. To Donald's amazement, Walter is grateful. Two sentences have been added at the end of this deletion and appear in the final manuscript: "Ellen made her stay at the Strand farm as brief as was reasonably possible. Clara treated her with studied courtesy, the others with spontaneous kindness, but she was aware that she had no part in this family circle, if, indeed, it could any longer be called a circle" (Manuscript Three, 293; Varma, 217-18).

332-333 These two pages, the beginning of the final chapter, are missing from Manuscript One. However, they are included in Manuscript Two (1946), and, as Varma notes, Manuscript Two ends with the clause "which had paid for itself again and again. ..." This is mid-sentence, and since page 334 of Manuscript One completes the sentence which Manuscript Two leaves hanging, common sense suggests that something is missing from both Manuscripts One and Two. (Varma does not mention the missing pages in Manuscript One.) As it happens, page 334 of Manuscript One picks up where page 333 of Manuscript Two leaves off, with "under his careful husbandry." This first manuscript, identical from this point with the third manuscript, continues to the final words, "plodding behind them in the gathering darkness."